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General Bounce

Or

The Lady and the Locusts

By the same Author

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General Bounce

Or

The Lady and the Locusts

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By

G. J. Whyte Melville

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In Two Volumes

Vol I

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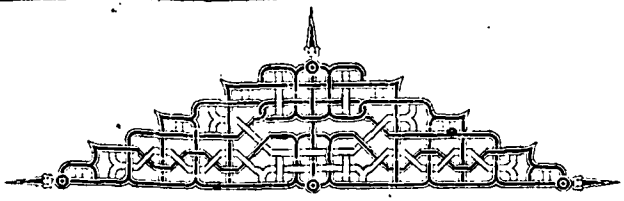

WHERE the Rose blushes in the garden, there will the Bee and the Butterfly be found, humming and fluttering around. So is it in the world; the fair girl, whose sweetness is enhanced by the fictitious advantages of wealth and position, will ever have lovers and admirers enough, and to spare.

Burns was no bad judge of human nature; and he has a stanza on this subject, combining the reflection of the philosopher with the *canny* discrimination of the Scot.

> Away with your follies of beauty's alarms,
> The *slender* bit beauty you clasp in your arms;
> But gie' me the lass that has acres of charms,
> Oh gie' me the lass with the *weel-plenished* farms.

Should the following pages, reprinted from *Fraser's Magazine*, afford such attractive young ladies matter for a few moments' reflection, the Author will not have written in vain.

May he hope they will choose well and wisely; and that the withered rose, when she has lost her fragrance, may be fondly prized and gently tended by the hand that plucked her in her dewy morning prime.

BOUGHTON, 1854.

CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE.

MY COUSIN 1

CHAPTER II.

THE ABIGAIL 26

CHAPTER III.

THE HANDSOME GOVERNESS 50

CHAPTER IV.

'LIBITINA' 76

CHAPTER V.

UNCLE BALDWIN 97

CHAPTER VI.

THE BLIND BOY 117

CHAPTER VII.

BOOT AND SADDLE! 141

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BALL 163

CHAPTER IX.

WANT 184

CHAPTER X.

PAGE.
SUPERFLUITY 209

CHAPTER XI.

CAMPAIGNING ABROAD 232

CHAPTER XII.

CAMPAIGNING AT HOME 257

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WORLD 283

GENERAL BOUNCE;

OR,

THE LADY AND THE LOCUSTS.

CHAPTER I.

My Cousin.

AN ENGLISHMAN'S HOLIDAY—ST. SWITHIN'S IN A CALM—THE MERCHANT'S AMBITION—'MON BEAU COUSIN'—CASTLES IN THE AIR—A LIVELY CRAFT—'HAIRBLOWER' AND HIS COLD BATH.

MUCH as we think of ourselves, and with all our boasted civilization, we Anglo-Saxons are but a half barbarian race after all. Nomadic, decidedly nomadic in our tastes, feelings, and pursuits, it is but the moisture of our climate that keeps us in our own houses at all, and like our Scandinavian ancestors (for in Turf parlance we have several crosses of the old Norse blood in our veins) we delight periodically, that is, whenever we have a fortnight's dry weather, to migrate from our dwellings, and peopling the whole of our own sea-board, push our invading hordes over the greater part of Europe, nor refrain

from thrusting our outposts even into the heart of Asia, till the astonished Mussulman, aghast at our vagaries, strokes his placid beard, and with a blessing on his Prophet that he is not as we are, soothes his disgust with a sentiment, so often repeated that in the East it has become a proverb, viz., that 'There is one devil, and there are many devils, but there is *no* devil like a Frank in a round hat!'

It was but last autumn that stepping painfully into our tailor's shop—for, alas! a course of London dinners cannot be persisted in, season after season, without producing a decided tendency to gout in the extremities—hobbling, then, into our tailor's warehouse, as he calls it, we were measured by an unfledged jackanapes, whose voice we had previously heard warning his brother fractions that 'an old gent. was a waitin' inside,' instead of that spruce foreman who, for more years than it is necessary to specify, has known our girth to an inch, and our weight to a pound. Fearful that in place of the grave habit of broadcloth, which we affect as most suitable to our age and manner, we might find ourselves equipped in one of the many grotesque disguises in which young gentlemen now-a-days deem it becoming to hide themselves, and described by the jackanapes aforesaid, who stepped round us in ill-concealed admiration of our corpulence, as 'a walking coat, a riding coat, a smoking coat, or a coat *to go to the stable in!*' we ventured to inquire for 'the

person we usually saw,' and were informed that 'the gent. as waited on us last year had gone for a few months' holiday to the Heast.' Heavens and earth, Mr. Bobstitch was even then in Syria! What a Scandinavian! rather degenerate to be sure in size and ferocity, though Bobstitch, being a little man, is probably very terrible when roused, but yet no slight contrast to one of those gaunt, grim, russet-bearded giants that made the despot of the Lower Empire quake upon his throne. And yet Bobstitch was but obeying the instinct which he inherits from the sea-kings his ancestors, an instinct which in less adventurous souls than a tailor's fills our watering-places to overflowing, and pours the wealth while it introduces the manners of the capital into every bight and bay that indents the shores of Britain.

Doubtless the citizens are right. Let us, while we are in Scandinavian vein, make use of an old Norse metaphor, and pressing into our service the two ravens of Odin, named Mind and Will, with these annihilate time and space, so as to be, like the Irish orator's bird, 'in two places at once.' Let us first of all take a retrospective glance at Mrs. Kettering's house in Grosvenor-square, one of the best houses, by the way, to be had in London for love or money. We recollect it well, not so many years ago, lit up for one of those great solemnities which novelists call 'a rout,' but which people in real life equally martially as well as metaphorically designate 'a drum.'

To us creeping home along the pavement outside the *fête*, it seemed the realization of fairy land. Row upon row, glaring carriage-lamps, like the fabulous monsters keeping watch, illuminated the square and adjoining streets, even to the public-house round the corner, that night driving a highly remunerative trade, whilst on a nearer inspection magnificent horses (horses, like ladies, look most beautiful by candle-light), gorgeous carriages — none of your Broughams and Clarences, but large, roomy, well-hung family coaches, with cartoons of heraldry on the panels, gigantic footmen, and fat coachmen, struck the beholder with admiration not totally unmixed with awe. Then the awning that was to admit the privileged to the inner realms of this earthly paradise, of which we the uninitiated might know but the exterior; what a gauzy, gaudy transparency it was, no unfitting portal to that upper story from which the golden light was hardly veiled by jalousies and window-blinds. Ever and anon much lashing of bay, brown, or chesnut sufferers, and the interference of a tall policeman, with a hat made on purpose to be assaulted by bludgeons, betokened the arrival of a fresh party, and angelic beings in white robes, with glossy hair, tripped daintily up the steps over a cloth, not of gold exactly, but of horse-hair, amongst a phalanx of unwashed faces, gazing [illegible] such loveliness in full dress. How beautiful we used to think these apparitions as we plodded home to our

quiet chambers; but young Bareface, our connecting link with the great world, who goes to all the *best* places, through the influence of his aunt, Lady Champfront, assures us they don't look half so beautiful inside, and that he sees quite as pretty faces, and hair quite as nicely done, at the little gatherings in Russell-square and Bloomsbury, to which even we might go if we liked. A radical, dog! we don't believe a word of it. Never mind, let us look at that house in the dead time of year. Without and within, from attics to basement, from the balcony facing the square to the empty bird-cage overlooking a precipice of offices at the back, Repose and Ennui reign supreme.—Were it not for the knocking of the workmen next door we might as well be in the great desert. There *is*, we presume, a woman in possession, but she has gone to 'get the beer,' and if you have ever sighed for a town-house, now is the time to be satisfied with your rustic lot, and to hug yourself that you are not paying ground-rent and taxes, church-rate, poor's-rate, and water-rate, drainage, lighting, and paving, for that ghastly palace of soot and cobwebs, dust, dreariness, and decay. There is a scaffolding up in every third house in the square, and workmen in paper caps, with foot-rules sticking out of their fustian trowsers, and complexions ingrained with lime-dust, and guiltless of fresh water, seem to be the only inhabitants of this deserted region, and even they are, 'between earth and

heaven.' Brown and parched are the unfortunate shrubs in those gardens of which discontented householders 'round the corner' covet so to possess a key; and the very birds, sparrows, every feather of 'em, hop about in dirty suits of plumage that can only be described as of that colour unknown to naturalists, which other people call 'grimy.' Who would be in London in the autumn? Not Mrs. Kettering certainly, if she might be elsewhere; and although she had possessed this excellent and commodious family mansion, with all its boudoirs, retreats, and appurtenances, so well described in the advertisement, but a short time, and was not the giver of that 'reunion of fashionables' we have depicted above (indeed the hostess of that evening has since been economising up two pair of stairs at Antwerp); yet Mrs. Kettering having plenty of money, and being able to do what she liked, had wisely moved herself, her fancies, her imperials, and her family to the coast, where, obeying the instinct for freedom that has driven Bobstitch to the desert, she was idly inhaling the salt breezes of the Channel, and dazzling her eyes with the sun-glint that sparkled over its dancing waves.

Some few years have elapsed since the events took place which we shall endeavour to describe; but the white cliffs of our island change little with the lapse of time, though the sea does make its encroachments ever and anon when the wind has been blowing pretty steady from the south-west for a fortnight or so, and

the same scene may be witnessed any fine day towards the middle of August as that which we are about to contrast with the dulness, closeness, and confinement of the great town-house in Grosvenor-square.

First, we must imagine a real summer's day, such a day as in our island we seldom enjoy till summer has well-nigh given place to autumn, but which, when it does come, is worth waiting for. Talk of climate! a real fine day in England, like a really handsome Englishwoman, beats creation. Well, we must imagine one of these bright, hot, hay-making days, almost too warm and dusty ashore, but enjoyable beyond conception on the calm and oily waves, unruffled by the breeze, and literally as smooth as glass. A sea-bird occasionally dips her wing on the surface, and then flaps lazily away, as if she too was as much inclined to go to sleep as yonder moveless fleet of lugger, brig, bark, and schooner, with their empty sails, and their heads all round the compass. There is a warm haze towards the land, and the white houses of St. Swithin's seem to glow and sparkle in the heat, whilst to sea-ward a modified sort of mirage would make one fancy one could plainly distinguish the distant coast of France.

Ashore, in those great houses, people are panting, and gasping, and creating thorough draughts that fill their rooms with a small white dust of a destructive tendency to all personal property. The children up-

stairs are running about in linen under-garments, somewhat more troublesome than usual, with a settled flush on their little peach-like cheeks, and the shining streets are deserted, save by the perspiring pot-boy and the fly-men drinking beer in their shirt-sleeves. Only afloat is there a chance of being cool; and sailing-boat, gig, dingy, and coble, all are in requisition for the throng of amateur mariners, rushing like ducklings to the refreshing element.

It was on just such a day as this that Mrs. Kettering found it extremely difficult to 'trim the boat.' A mile or so from the shore, that boat was slowly progressing, impelled by the unequal strength of her nephew Charles, commonly called 'Cousin Charlie,' and its worthy proprietor, a fine specimen of the genus 'seaman,' who certainly had a Christian name, and probably a patronymic, but had sunk both distinctions under the soubriquet of 'Hairblower,' by which appellation alone he was acknowledged by gentle and simple, bold and timid, delicate ladies and bluff fishermen, along many a mile of sea-board, up and down from St. Swithin's.

'The least thing further, Master Charles,' said Hairblower, ever and anon pulling the stripling's efforts round with one hand. 'Don't ye disturb, Madam—don't ye move, Miss Blanche; it's not *your* weight that makes her roll.' And again he moistened the large, strong hand, and tur[illegible]

In vain Mrs. Kettering shut up her parasol, and shifted her seat; in vain she disposed her ample figure, first in one uncomfortable position, then in another; she could *not* 'trim the boat,' and the reason was simple enough. Mrs. Kettering's weight was that of a lady who had all her life been 'a fine woman,' and was now somewhat past maturity; whilst her daughter and only child, 'Blanche,' the occupant of the same bench, had but just arrived at that period when the girl begins to lengthen out into the woman, and the slight lanky figure, not without a grace peculiar to itself, is nevertheless as delicate as a gossamer, and as thin as its own gauzy French bonnet.

Mother and daughter were but little alike, save in their sweet and rather languid tone of voice—no trifling charm in that sex which is somewhat prone, especially under excitement, to pitch its organ in too high a key. Mrs. Kettering was dark and brown of complexion, with sparkling black eyes, and a rich colour, much heightened by the heat. Not very tall in stature, but large and square of frame, well filled out besides by a good appetite, a good digestion, and, though nervous and excitable, a good temper. Blanche, on the contrary, with her long violet eyes, her curving dark eyelashes, and golden-brown hair, was so slight of frame and delicate of tint as to warrant her mother's constant alarm for her health; not that there was any real cause for anxiety, but

mamma loved to fidget, if not about 'dear Blanche,' about something belonging to her, and failing these, had a constant fund of worry in the exploits and escapades of graceless 'Cousin Charlie.'

'Now, Charlie, my own dear boy' (Mrs. K. was very fond of Charlie), 'I know you must be overheating yourself—nothing so bad for growing lads. Mr. Hairblower, *pray* don't let him row so hard.'

'Gammon, aunt,' was Charlie's irreverent reply. 'Wait till we get her head round with the flood, we'll make her speak to it, wont we, Hairblower?'

'Well, Master Charles,' said the jolly tar, 'I think as you and me could pull her head under, pretty nigh,—howsoever we be fairish off for time, and the day's young yet.'

'Blanche, Blanche!' suddenly exclaimed Mrs. Kettering, 'look at the weed just beyond that buoy —the alga, what's its name, we were reading about yesterday. Charlie, of course *you* have forgotten. I shall soon be obliged to get a finishing governess for you, Blanche.'

'Oh no, dearest mamma,' said the young girl, in her soft, sweet voice, which always drew Hairblower's eyes, in speechless admiration, to her gentle countenance. 'I could never learn with any one but you; and then she might be cross, mamma, and I should hate her so after you!' And Blanche took her mother's plump, tightly-gloved hand between her own, and looked up in her face with such a fond,

bewitching expression, that it was no wonder mamma doated on her, and Hairblower and 'Cousin Charlie' too.

Mrs. Kettering was one of those people whose superabundant energy must have a certain number of objects whereon to expend itself. Though a pleasant, cheerful woman, she was decidedly *blue*—that is to say, besides being a good musician, linguist, draughtswoman, and worsted worker, she had a few ideas, not very correct, upon ancient history, a superficial knowledge of modern literature, thought Shakspeare *vulgar* and Milton *dry*, with a smattering of the 'ologies, and certain theories concerning chemistry, which, if reduced to practice, would have made her a most unsafe occupant for a ground floor. With these advantages, and her sunny, pleasant temper, she taught Blanche *everything* herself; and if the young lady was not quite so learned as some of her associates, she had at least the advantage of a mother's companionship and tuition, and was as far removed as possible from that most amusing specimen of affectation, an English girl who has formed her manner on that of a French governess.

Mrs. Kettering had gone through her share of troubles in her youth, and being of a disposition by no means despondent, was rather happy under difficulties than otherwise. We do not suppose she married her first love; we doubt if women often do, except in novels, and the late Mr. K. was a gentle-

man of an exterior certainly more respectable than romantic. His manners were abrupt and commercial, but his name at the back of a bill was undeniable. The lady whom he wooed and won was old enough to know her own mind; nor have we reason to suppose but that in pleasing him she pleased herself. Many a long year they toiled and amassed, and old Kettering attended closely to business, though he never showed his books to his wife; and Mrs. Kettering exercised her diplomacy in migrating once every five years further and further towards 'the West End.' Their last house but one was in Tyburnia, and then old Kettering put a finishing stroke to his business, made a shot at indigo which landed him more thousands than our modest ideas can take in, and enabling him to occupy that mansion in Grosvenor-square, which looked so dull in the autumn, placed Mrs. Kettering at once on the pedestal she had all her life been sighing to attain—perhaps she was disappointed when she got there. However that may be, the enterprising merchant himself obtained little by his new residence, save a commodious vault belonging to it, in a neighbouring church, in which his remains were soon after deposited, and a tablet, pure and unblemished as his own commercial fame, erected to his memory by his disconsolate widow. How disconsolate she was, poor woman! for a time, with her affectionate nature: but then her greatest treasure, Blanche, was left; and her late husband, as

the most appropriate mark of his confidence and esteem, bequeathed the whole of his property, personal and otherwise, to his well-beloved wife, so the blow was to a certain degree softened, and Mrs. Kettering looked uncommonly radiant and prosperous even in her weeds.

Now, it is very pleasant and convenient to have a large property left you at your own disposal, more especially when you are blessed with a child on whom you dote, to succeed you when you have no further occasion for earthly treasure; and in the eyes of the world, this was Mrs. Kettering's agreeable lot. The eyes of the world, as usual, could not look into the cupboard where the skeleton was; but our poor widow, or rather our rich widow, was much hampered by the shape which no one else knew to exist.

The fact is, old Mr. Kettering had a crotchet. Being a rich man, he had a right to a dozen; but he was a sensible, quiet old fellow, and he contented himself with one. Now this crotchet was the invincible belief that he, John Kettering, was the lineal male representative of one of the oldest families in England. How he came to have lost the old Norman features and appearance, or how it happened that such a lofty descent should have merged in his own person as junior clerk to a large city counting-house, he never troubled himself to inquire—he was satisfied that the oldest blood in Europe coursed through his veins, and with the pedi-

gree he supposed himself to possess (though its traces were unfortunately extinct), he might marry whom he pleased. As we have seen, he did marry a very personable lady; but, alas! she gave him no male heir. Under a female succession, all his toil, all his astuteness, all his money, would not raise the family name to the proud position he believed its due. He could not bear the idea of it; and he never really loved poor Blanche half so much as that engaging child deserved. When all chance of a son was hopeless, he resolved to bring up and educate his only brother's orphan child, a handsome little boy, whose open brow and aristocratic lineaments won the old man's favour from the first.

'Cousin Charlie,' in consequence, became an inmate of the Kettering family, and was usually supposed by strangers to be the elder brother of pretty little Blanche.

These intentions, however, were kept a dead secret; and the children knew as little as children generally do of their future prospects, or the path chalked out for them through life. With all his fancied importance, old Kettering was a good, right-feeling man; and although it is our belief that he revoked and destroyed several testamentary documents, he ended by leaving everything to his wife, in her own power, as he worded it, 'in testimony of his esteem for her character, and confidence in her affection'—previously exacting from her a solemn promise that she would

eventually bequeath the bulk of her wealth to his nephew, should the lad continue to behave well, and *like a gentleman*—making a provision for Blanche, at her own discretion, but not exceeding one-eighth of the whole available property.

The testator did not long survive his final arrangements. And though her promise cost his widow many a sleepless night, she never dreamed of breaking it, nor of enriching her darling child at the expense of her nephew.

Mrs. Kettering was a woman all over, and we will not say the idea of uniting the two cousins had not entered her mind; on the contrary, brought up together as they were, she constantly anticipated this consummation as a delightful release from her conflicts between duty and inclination. She was, besides, very fond of 'Cousin Charlie,' and looked eagerly forward to the day when she might see this 'charming couple,' as she called them, fairly married and settled. With all these distractions, it is no wonder that Mrs. Kettering, who though a bustling, was an undecided woman, could never quite make up her mind to complete her will. It was a matter of the greatest importance; so first she made it, and then tore it up, and then constructed a fresh one, which she omitted to sign until things were more certain, and eventually mislaid; while, in the meantime, Blanche and 'Cousin Charlie' were growing up to that age at which young people, more especially in

matters of love-making, are pretty resolutely determined to have a will of their own.

The bridegroom presumptive, however, was one of those young gentlemen, in whose heads or hearts the idea of marriage is only contemplated as a remote possibility, and a dreaded termination to a life of enjoyment—in much the same light as that in which the pickpocket views transportation beyond the seas. He believes it to be the common lot of mankind, but that it may be indefinitely postponed with a little circumspection, and in some cases of rare good fortune even eluded altogether.

It is curious to observe at what an early age the different instincts of the sexes develop themselves in children. Little Miss can scarcely waddle before she shoulders a doll, which she calls her baby, and on which she lavishes much maternal care, not without certain wholesome correction. From her earliest youth, the abstract idea of wife and motherhood is familiar to her mind; and to be married, though she knows not what it is, as natural and inevitable a destiny as to learn music and have a governess. Young Master, on the contrary, has no idea of being a *pater familias*. His notion of being grown up is totally unconnected with housekeeping. When 'he is a man he means to be a soldier, or a sailor, or a pastry-cook—he will have a gun and hunters, and go all day to the stable, and eat as much as he chooses, and drink port wine like papa;' but to bring up

children of his own, and live in one place, is the very last thing he dreams of. 'Cousin Charlie' entertained the usual notions of his kind. Although an orphan, he had never known the want of a parent —uncle and aunt Kettering supplying him with as kind and indulgent a father and mother as a spoilt little boy could desire. And although he had his childish sorrows, such as parting from Blanche, going to school, being whipped according to his deserts when there, and thus smuggled through that amusing work, the Latin Grammar; yet, altogether, his life was as happy as any other child's of his own age, on whom health, and love, and plenty had shone from the day of its birth.

Of course old John Kettering sent him to Eton, that most aristocratic of schools, where Charlie learnt to swim—no mean accomplishment,—arrived at much perfection in his 'wicket-keeping,' and 'hitting to the leg,' as, indeed, he deserved, for the powers of application he evinced in the study of cricket; was taught to 'feather an oar' in a method which the London watermen pronounced extremely inefficient; and acquired a knack of construing Horace into moderately bad English, with a total disregard for the ideas, habits, prejudices, and intentions of that courtly bard. Of course, too, he was destined for the army. With *his* prospects, in what other profession could he get through his allowance, and acquire gentlemanlike habits of extravagance in what

is termed good society? Old Kettering wanted to make his nephew a gentleman—that was it. When asked how Charlie was getting on at Eton, and what he learnt there, the uncle invariably replied, 'Learn, sir, why, he'll learn to be a gentleman.'

It is a matter for conjecture whether the worthy merchant was capable of forming an opinion as to the boy's progress in this particular study, or whether he was himself a very good judge of the variety he so much admired. Our own idea is, that neither birth, nor riches, nor education, nor manner suffice to constitute a gentleman, and that specimens are to be found at the plough, the loom, and the forge, in the ranks, and before the mast, as well as in the officers' mess-room, the learned professions, and the upper house itself. To our fancy, a gentleman is courteous, kindly, brave, and high-principled—considerate towards the weak, and self-possessed amongst the strong. High-minded and unselfish, 'he does to others as he would they should do unto him,' and shrinks from the meanness of taking advantage of his neighbour, man or woman, friend or foe, as he would from the contamination of cowardice, duplicity, tyranny, or any other blackguardism. '*Sans peur et sans reproche*,'—he has a 'lion's courage with a woman's heart;' and such an one, be he in a peer's robes or a ploughman's smock—backing before his sovereign or delving for his bread, we deem a very Bayard for chivalry—a very Chesterfield for good-

breeding and good sense. We are old-fashioned though in our ideas, and doubtless our sentiments may be dubbed slow by the young, and vulgar by the great. Still, even these dissentients would, we think, have been satisfied with 'Cousin Charlie's' claims to be considered 'a gentleman.'

Nature had been beforehand with old Kettering, and had made him one of her own mould. Not all the schools in Europe could have spoiled or improved him in that particular. And his private tutor's lady discovered this quality, with all a woman's intuitive tact, the very first evening he spent at the vicarage of that reverend Crichton, who prepared young gentlemen of fifteen years and upwards for *both* the universities and *all* the professions.

'What do you think of the new pupil, my dear?' said Mr. Nobottle, to his wife—a dean's daughter, no less!—as he drew up the connubial counterpane to meet the edge of his night-cap. 'He was a wild lad, I hear, at Eton. I am afraid we shall have some trouble with him.'

'Not a bit of it,' was the reply; 'he is a gentleman every inch of him. I saw it at once, by the way he helped Tim in with his portmanteau. Binks, of course, was out of the way,—and that reminds me Mr. Nobottle, you never *will* speak to that man—what's the use of having a butler? And then, he's such a remarkably good-looking boy—but I daresay you're half asleep already.'

And, sure enough, patient Joseph Nobottle was executing a prolonged and marital snore.

Mrs. Nobottle found no occasion to recant her predictions: and Charlie was now spending his summer vacation with Mrs. Kettering at St. Swithin's.

We have left the party so long in their boat, that they have had ample time to 'trim' or sink her. Neither of these events, however, took place; and after pulling round a Swedish brig, an enormous tub, very *wholesome*-looking, as Hairblower said, and holding a polyglot conversation with an individual in a red night-cap, who grinned at the ladies, and offered them 'schnapps,' they turned the little craft's head towards the shore, and taking 'the flood,' as Charlie had previously threatened, bent themselves to their work, and laid out upon their oars in a style that satisfied even the seaman, and enraptured the lad.

'What a dear boy it is!' thought Mrs. Kettering, as she looked at Charlie's open countenance, and his fair golden curls, blowing about his face, browned by the weather to a rich manly hue, and lit up with the excitement and exercise of his work. Many qualms of conscience crossed Mrs. Kettering's mind, in the transit of that mile and a-half of blue water which sparkled between 'the Swede' and the shore. Much she regretted her want of decision and habits of delay in not completing the important document that should at once make that handsome boy the

head of his family; and firmly she resolved that not another week should pass without a proper consultation of the universal refuge, 'her family man-of-business,' and a further legal drawing up of her last will and testament. Then she remembered she had left one unfinished, that would make an excellent rough draft for the future document; then she wondered where she had put it; and then she thought what a husband the handsome cousin would make for her own beautiful girl;—and rapidly her ideas followed each other, till, in her mind's eye, she saw the wedding—the bridesmaids—the procession—the breakfast—and, though last, not least, the very bonnet, not too sombre, which she herself should wear on the occasion.

Not one word did Mrs. Kettering hear of a long-winded story with which Hairblower was delighting Blanche and Charlie; and which, as it seemed to create immense interest and sympathy in his young listeners, and is, besides, a further example of the general superstition of sailors as to commencing any undertaking on a Friday, we may as well give, as nearly as possible, in his own words.

'Blown, Master Charles?' said the good-humoured seaman, in answer to a question from hard-working Charlie. 'Blown? Not a bit of it; nor yet tired; nor you neither. I *was* a bit bamboozled though once somewhere hereaway. It's a good many years past now; but I don't think as *I* shall ever forget it,

If you'd like to hear it, Miss Blanche, I'll tell it you, as well as I can. You see, it was rather a 'circumstance' from beginning to end. Well, the fact is, I had built a smartish craft very soon after I was out of my time, and me and a man we used to call 'Downright,' went partners in her, and although maybe she was a trifle crank, and noways useful for stowage, we had pretty good times with her when the mackerel was early, and the prices pretty stiffish. But there never was no real luck about her, and I'll tell ye how it was. My uncle, he promised to help me with the money for her of a Friday. She was put upon the stocks of a Friday—finished off of a Friday—sailed her first trip of a Friday—and went down of a Friday; so, as I say, Friday's the worst day, to my mind, in the whole week. Well, the *Spanking Sally*—that's what we called her, Miss—always carried a weather helm. And one day—it was a Friday, too—me and my mate was coming in with a fairish cargo—Downright he said all along she was over-deep in the water—with a light breeze from the nor'-nor'-west, and the tide about half-flood, as it might be now. I had just gone forward to look to the tackle, when the wind suddenly shifted right on the other tack, and looking out down Channel, I saw what was coming. Black was it, Master Charlie? Not a bit; it was a white one; and I knew then we should get it *hot and heavy*. It takes something pretty cross to frighten *me*, but I own I didn't like

the looks of it. Well, afore I could douse foresail the squall took her. She capsized, and down she went; and though me and Downright stood by for a start to windward, we never knew exactly how it was till we found ourselves grinning at each other over a spare oar that happened to be on board when she misbehaved, for all the world like two boys playing at see-saw with their mouths full of salt water. Downright he was an older man, and not so strong as me; so when I saw two was no company for one oar, I left it; and, thinks I, if I can get off my fisherman's boots and some of my clothes, I may have a swim for it yet.

'The squall was too soon over to get up anything like a sea, and Downright he held on to his oar and struck out like a man. Well, what between floating and treading water, I got most of my things clear. I was as strong as a bull then, and though it was a long swim for a man I had before me, I never lost heart noway. Downright, too, kept on close in my wake; we didn't say much, you may be sure, but I know *I* thought of his missus and four children. At last I hear him whisper, quite hoarse-like 'Hairblower, it's no use, I be goin' down now!' And when I turned on my back to look at him he was quite confused, and had let the oar cast off altogether. I couldn't see it nowhere. I tried to get alongside of him, but he was gone. I saw *the bubbles* though, and dived for him, but it was no use, and after that

I held on alone. The sun was getting down too, and queer fancies began to come into my head about Downright. Sometimes I thought he was in heaven *then*, and once I'll swear I heard something whisper to me, but I couldn't tell what it said. The gulls, too, they began to stoop at me, and scream in my ears; one long-winged 'un flapped me on the cheek, and for a bit I scarcely knew whether I was dead or alive myself. At last, as I came over the tops of the rollers I saw the spars in the harbour, and the chimneys at St. Swithin's, and for awhile I thought I should get home after all, so I turned on my side to get my breath a bit. I ought to have made a buoy, as I calculated, about this time, but seek where I would, I couldn't see it nowhere, only looking down Channel to get my bearings a little, I saw by the craft at anchor in the bay that the tide was on the turn—My heart leaped into my mouth then.—I had pulled a boat often enough against the ebb hereabouts, and I knew how strong it ran, and what my chance was swimming, and nearly done too. First I thought I'd go quietly down at once, like my mate did, and I said a bit of a prayer, just inside like, and then I felt stronger, so I thought what was best to be done, and says I, 'bout ship,' now is our only chance, and maybe we shall get picked up by some fishing craft, or such like, afore we drift clean out to sea again. Well, the Lord's above all, and though I thought once or twice I was pretty nigh out of my

mind, I *was* picked up at last by a Frenchman. *He'd* no call to be where he was; I think he was there special, but I knew very little about anything else, for I was in the hospital nine weeks afore I could remember as much as I've told you. Howsoever, Friday's an unlucky day, Miss Blanche, you may take your Bible oath of it.'

Hairblower did *not* tell them that half his earnings as soon as he got well went to the support of his mate's widow and her four children; perhaps it was as well he did not, for Blanche's eyes were already full of tears, and Charlie felt more than half inclined to embrace the honest seaman, but a bump against the shingle disturbed all their comments, at the same time that it broke through Mrs. Kettering's day-dreams, and Blanche had hardly got as far as, 'Here we are, mamma, and here's ——,' when she was interrupted by Cousin Charlie's voiciferous 'Look alive, aunt. Hurrah! three cheers—who'd have thought it? There's Frank Hardingstone!'

CHAPTER II.

The Abigail.

BLANCHE'S BOUDOIR—A LADY'S LADY'S-MAID—MRS. KETTERING AT LUNCHEON—AN HOUR'S PRACTICE—THE 'MAN OF ACTION'—FOOD FOR THE MIND—A FRIEND IN NEED—A VISIT TO DAVID JONES.

WHILST Mr. Hardingstone offers an arm—and a good strong arm it is—to each of the ladies, and assists them slowly up the toilsome shingle, let us take advantage of Blanche's absence to peep into her pretty room, where, as it is occupied only by Gingham, the maid, we need not fear the fate of Actæon as a punishment for our curiosity.

It is indeed a sweet little retreat, with its chintz hangings and muslin curtains, its open windows looking upon the shining channel, and all its etceteras of girlish luxury and refinement, that to us poor old bachelors seem the very essence of ladylike comfort. In one corner stands the bookcase, by which we may discover the pretty proprietor's tastes, at least in literature. Divers stiffish volumes on the sciences repose comfortably enough, as if they had not often been disturbed, and although scrupulously dusted,

were but seldom opened; but on the sofa, near that full-length glass, a new novel lies upon its face, with a paper-cutter inserted at that critical page where the heroine refuses her lover (in blank verse) on the high-minded principle that he is not sufficiently poor to test her sincerity, or sufficiently sensible to know his own mind, or some equally valid and uncomplimentary reason,—a consideration for the male sex, we may remark *en passant*, that is more common in works of fiction than in real life; while on the table a drawing-room scrap-book opens of itself at some thrilling lines addressed 'To a Débutante,' and commencing, 'Fair girl, the priceless gems upon thy brow,' by an anonymous nobleman, who betrays in the composition a wide range of fancy and a novel application of several English words. Flowers are disposed in one or two common glass vases, with a womanly taste, that makes the apartment in that hired house like a home; and loose music, of the double-action pianoforte school, scatters itself about every time the door opens, in a system of fluttering disorder, which provokes Gingham to express audibly her abhorrence of a place that is 'all of a litter.' 'She can't a-bear it—can you, bully?' smirks the Abigail, and Blanche's pet bull-finch, the darling of her very heart, makes an enormous chest, and whistles his reply in the opening notes of 'Haste to the wedding,' breaking off abruptly in the middle of the second bar. Gingham is very busy, for she is

putting Blanche's 'things to rights,' which means that she is looking over the young lady's wardrobe with a view to discovering those colours and garments most becoming to her own rather bilious complexion, and losing no opportunity of acquainting herself with Blanche's likes, dislikes, feelings, and disposition, by reading her books, opening her letters, and peeping into her album.

Now Gingham had been with Mrs. Kettering for many years, and was a most trustworthy person; so her mistress affirmed and thought. Certainly, with all her weaknesses and faults, she was devotedly attached to Miss Blanche; and it is our firm belief that she loved her young lady in her heart of hearts, better than her perquisites, her tea, or even a certain Tom Blacke, whose dashing appearance, and assured vulgarity had made no slight impression on her too susceptible feelings. 'Every Jack has his Gill,' if he and she can only find each other out at the propitious moment; and although the Gill in question *owned to* two-and-thirty, was by no means transparent in complexion, and had projecting teeth, and a saffron-coloured front, yet she was no exception to the beautiful law of nature, which provides for every variety of our species a mate of fitting degree.

When a lady confines herself studiously to the house, avoids active exercise, and partakes heartily of five meals a-day, not to mention strong tea and hot buttered toast at odd times, the presumption is,

that her health will suffer from the effects of such combined hardships. With patients of Gingham's class, the attack generally flies to the nerves, and the system becomes wrought up to such a pitch that nothing appears to afford the sufferer relief, except piercing screams and violent demonstration of alarm upon slight and often imaginary occasions. Gingham would shriek as loudly to encounter a live mouse as Mrs. Kettering would have done to face a raging lion; and an unexpected meeting with any individual, even residing in the same house, was apt to produce a flutter of spirits and prostration of intellect truly surprising to those who are unacquainted with the delicate organization of a real lady's-maid *not* on board wages. In this critical condition, Mrs. Gingham, on the first evening of her arrival at St. Swithin's, 'got a start,' as she expressed it, which influenced the whole destiny of her after life. Coming down from dressing her lady, she wended her way, as usual, to 'the room,' that sanctum in which the etiquette of society is far more rigidly enforced than up-stairs, and to which 'plush and powder' would find it far more difficult to obtain the entrée than into master's study or 'missus's' boudoir. Expecting to see nothing more formidable than the butler, Gingham's alarm can be more easily imagined than described, when, on entering this privileged apartment, she found its only occupant a goodish-looking, flashily dressed young man, 'taking a glass of sherry

and a biscuit,' and making himself very much at home.

A suppressed scream and sudden accession of faintness made it imperative on the new arrival to exert himself, and by the time they had got to 'Goodness! how you frightened me, sir,' and 'Dear *Miss*, I beg a thousand pardings!' they became very good friends, and the timid fair one was prevailed on to sit down and partake of the refreshments hospitably provided by the butler at his mistress's expense.

Tom Blacke very soon informed the lady that 'he was assistant to a professional gentleman' (in plain English an attorney's clerk), and had merely looked in to see if the house was let, to inform his employer. 'I am very unhappy, miss, to have been the cause of alarming of you so, and I trust you will look over it, and may feel no ill effects from the haccident.' To which Gingham, who was a lady of elaborate politeness, as became her station, and, moreover, much mollified by the constant use of the juvenile title 'Miss,' courteously replied that 'Indeed, it had given her *quite a turn*, but she could not regret a meeting that had introduced her to such a polite acquaintance.' So they parted with many 'good evenings,' and an openly expressed hope that they should meet again.

Tom Blacke was a scamp of the first water, but not deficient in shrewdness, to which his professional

pursuits added a certain amount of acquired cunning. He naturally reflected that the sensitive, middle-aged dame whom he had thus alarmed and soothed was probably an old and esteemed servant of the family at No. 9. The whole arrangements looked like being 'well-to-do.' The butler poured out sherry as if it was small-beer, and probably in such an establishment the confidential maid might have saved a pretty bit of money, to which, even incumbered with the lady in question, Tom Blacke would have had no earthly objection. He was, as he said himself, 'open to a match,' and being a rosy dark-whiskered fellow, with good teeth and consummate assurance, though he never looked at *you* till you had done looking at *him*, he resolved to lay siege forthwith to the heart of Mrs. Gingham. A nervous temperament is usually susceptible; and though her fingers are occupied in folding Blanche's handkerchiefs, and 'putting away' her gloves, shoes, and etceteras, the Abigail's thoughts are even now far away round the corner, up two pair of stairs, in the office with Tom Blacke.

'Goodness gracious! Missus's bell!' exclaims Gingham, with a start, as if she had *not* expected that summons at its usual time, viz., when Mrs. Kettering came in to shake her feathers before luncheon, and she runs down palpitating, as if the house were on fire. Though we must not stay to see Blanche take her bonnet off and smoothe those sunny ringlets,

we may go and wait for her in the luncheon-room, to which she is soon heard tripping merrily down, with even brighter eyes than usual, perhaps from the excitement of meeting Cousin Charles's friend, Mr. Hardingstone, whom shy Blanche knows but very little, and with whom she is consequently extremely diffident, notwithstanding the deference of his manner, and the respectful, almost admiring tone in which he always addresses the young girl.

'Blanche, have you fed Bully? and practised your music? and read your history? Women should never neglect history. And looked for the name of that weed, whilst we think of it? and shall I give you some chicken?' said Mrs. Kettering, without waiting for an answer, as she sat down to a very comfortable repast about three o'clock in the afternoon, which she called luncheon, but which was by no means a bad imitation of a good dinner.

'No, dear mamma,' said Blanche; 'besides, it's too hot for lessons: but tell me, mamma, what did Mr. Hardingstone mean about a mermaid, when he whispered to 'Cousin Charlie,' and Charlie laughed?'

'A mermaid, Blanche? pooh! nonsense! there's no such animal. But that reminds me,—don't forget to look over that beautiful thing of Tennyson's; girls should always be 'up' in modern literature. Do you know, Blanche, I don't quite like Mr. Hardingstone.'

'Oh, mamma,' said Blanche, 'such a friend of

Charlie's,—I am sure we ought to like him; and I am sure he likes *us*; what a way he came down through that horrid shingle to help you out of the boat; and did you see, mamma, what nice thin boots he had on;—I think I should like him very much if we knew him better. Not so much as 'Cousin Charlie,'' added the young girl, reflectively, 'or dear darling Hairblower. How shocking it was when his partner went down, mamma. Did you hear that story? But I am sure Mr. Hardingstone is very good-natured.'

'That reminds me, my dear,' said Mrs. Kettering, who was getting rather flushed towards the end of the chicken, 'I do hope that boy is not gone to bathe; I am always afraid about water. Blanche, hand me the sherry; and, my dear, I must order some bottled porter for *you*,—you are very pale in this hot weather; but I am always fidgetty about Charlie when he is bathing.'

From the conversation recorded above, we may gather that Mrs. Kettering, who, as we have said, was inclined to be nervous, was rapidly becoming so upon one or two important points. In the first place, with all a mother's pride in her daughter's beauty, she could not be blind to the general admiration excited thereby, nor could she divest herself of certain misgivings that Blanche would not long remain to be the solace of her widowhood, but that, to use her own expression, she was 'sure to be *snapped up* before

she was old enough to know her own mind.' The consequence was, that Mrs. Kettering much mistrusted all her male acquaintance under the age of old-fellowhood, a period of life which, in these days of 'wonderfully young-looking men,' seems indefinitely postponed; and regarded every well-dressed, well-whiskered biped as a possible subverter of her schemes and a probable rival to 'Cousin Charlie;' she kept him at bay, accordingly, with a coldness and reserve quite foreign to her own cordial and demonstrative nature. Frank Hardingstone she could not dislike, do what she would. And we are bound to confess that she was less guarded in her encouragement of that gentleman than of any other male visitor who appeared in the afternoons at No. 9, to leave a small bit of glazed pasteboard, with an inward thanksgiving for his escape from a morning visit, or to utter incontrovertible platitudes while he smoothed his hat on his coat-sleeve, and glanced ever and anon at the clock on the chimney-piece, for the earliest moment at which, with common decency, he might take his departure.

Then the safety and soundness of Blanche's heart was scarcely more a matter of anxiety than that of Charlie's body; and the boy seemed to take a ghastly delight in placing himself constantly in situations of imminent bodily peril. Active and high-spirited, he was perpetually climbing inaccessible places, shooting with dangerous guns, riding wild hacks, over-heating

himself in matches against time, and, greatest anxiety of all, performing aquatic feats—the principal result of his Eton education—*out of his depth*, as his aunt observed with emphasis, which were totally inexcusable as manifest temptations of fate.

He was now gone off on an expedition with his friend and senior Hardingstone; but well did Mrs. Kettering know that yonder blue, cool-looking sea would be an irresistible temptation, and that her nephew would 'bundle in,' as he called it, to a moral certainty, the instant he got away from the prying gaze of the town.

'In the meantime,' thought she, 'it's a comfort to have Blanche safe at her studies; there is nothing like occupation for the mind to keep foolish fancies out of a young girl's head; so bring your books down here, my love,' she added, aloud, 'and after we have read the last act of *Don Carlos*, you can practise your music, whilst I rest myself a little on the sofa.'

With all its beauties, *Don Carlos* is a work of which a few pages go a long way, when translated into their own vernacular by two ladies who have but a slight acquaintance with the German language; and Blanche soon tired of the princely step-son's more than filial affection, and the guttural warmth with which it is expressed, so she drew mamma's sofa to the open window, shut the door to keep her out of the draught, and sat down to her piano-forte with an arch 'Good night, mammy; you won't hear any of

my mistakes, so I shall play my lesson over as fast as ever I can.'

Snore away, honest Mrs. Kettering, in the happy conviction that you have given your daughter ample occupation of mind, to say nothing of fingers, in the execution of those black-looking pages, so trying to the temper and confusing to the ear. Snore away, and believe that her thoughts and affections are as much under your control as her little body used to be, when you put her to bed with your own hands, and she said her innocent prayers on your knee. So you all think of your children; so you all deceive yourselves, and are actually surprised when symptoms of wilfulness or insubordination appear in your own families, though you have long warned your neighbours that 'boys will be boys'; or 'girls are always thoughtless' when they have complained to you of their parental disappointments and disgusts. You think you know your children—you, who can scarce be said to know *yourself*. The bright boy at your side, who calls you by the endearing appellation of 'the governor,' you fondly imagine he is drinking in those words of wisdom in which you are laying down rules for his future life of frugality, usefulness, and content. Not a bit of it. He is thinking of his pony and his tick at the pie-shop, which will make a sad hole in the sovereign you will probably present to him on his return to Mr. Birch's.

You describe in well chosen language the miseries

of a 'bread-and-cheese' marriage to your eldest daughter, a graceful girl, whose fair, open brow you think would well become a coronet, and she seems to listen with all attention to your maxims, and to agree cordially with 'dear papa' in worldly prudence, and an abhorrence of what you call 'bad style of men.' When her mother, with flushed countenance and angry tones, despatches you to look for her to-night between the quadrilles, ten to one but you find her in the tea-room with Captain Clank, 'that odious man without a sixpence,' as your energetic spouse charitably denominates him. And yet, as child after child spreads its late-fledged wings, and forsakes the shelter of the parental nest, you go on hoping that the next, and still the next, will make amends to you for all the short-comings of its seniors, till the youngest—the Benjamin—the darling of your old age—the treasure, that was, indeed, to be your 'second self'—takes flight after the rest, and you feel a dreary void at your heart, and a solemn, sad conviction that the best and holiest affections of an earthly nature are insufficient for its happiness—that there *must* be something better to come when everything here turns to heart-ache and disappontment.

But Blanche will not think so for many a long day yet. Though the minims, and crotchets, and flats and sharps were mixed up in sadly puzzling confusion, not a frown of impatience crossed that pure, open brow. Blanche's own thoughts were a

panacea for all the provocations that the stiffest piece of musico-mechanism, or mechanical music, could inflict. It is a task beyond our powers to detail the vague ideas and shadowy dreams that chased each other through that glossy little head, nor have we any business to try. A young girl's brain is a page of poetry, without rhyme certainly, probably without much reason, but poetry notwithstanding. Before the world has lost its gloss of novelty, that gloss which is like the charm that dazzled the eyes of their mortal visitors, and made the Fairies' straws and withered leaves and cobwebs, look like purple hangings, and tapestry, and ivory, and gold—before life has borne away much to regret, and sin brought much to repent of—before the fruit has been plucked which still hangs from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, there is a positive pleasure in the mere act of thinking; and that intellectual luxury Blanche enjoyed to the utmost, whilst her fingers were tripping over the piano-forte keys, and Mrs. Kettering was snoring comfortably on the sofa.

Now Frank Hardingstone was prime favourite and *beau ideal* with 'Cousin Charlie,' who, like all boys, had selected an idol a few years older than himself, and clothed him with those imaginary attributes which youth considers essential to constitute a hero. Frank was a country-gentleman, in possession of his property at the early age of five-and-twenty, and truth to tell, somewhat bored with his position. If

we were to describe him, we should say he was 'a man of action,' rather than 'a man of feeling,' or 'a man of business,' or 'a man of refinement,' or 'a man of pleasure,' or a man of anything else. He looked energetic too, and vigorous, with his brown healthy complexion, his open forehead, clear, penetrating eye, and short clustering hair and whiskers. Had he been the least thing of a coxcomb, in dress or manner, the ladies would have voted him very handsome; but he was plain to simplicity in his attire, and rather abrupt in his address, so they abused him amongst themselves, but were very civil to him notwithstanding. The men, particularly the sporting ones, who are always ready with their judgments and opinions, pronounced that he 'looked a good one all over,' alluding, as we understand the phrase, not so much to his virtue, as his corporeal powers, and capability of resisting fatigue. We are not so far removed from a state of barbarism in the present day, as we are prone to flatter ourselves. When young King James called the grim old Douglas 'his Graysteil,' that royal heart was attached to Earl Angus for his magnificent frame and skill in feats of arms, and efforts of strength, not for the giant's wisdom, which was doubtful, or his honesty, which was entirely negative; and so amongst any assemblage of young gentlemen now in the nineteenth century, the quality which excites most admiration, seems to be a certain combination of activity and recklessness,

which they called *hardness*. 'Was Rakes in time for Parade?'—'O yes, he drank four bottles of claret and never went to bed—he's a deuced *hard* fellow Rakes' (applause). 'Was Captain Cropper hurt when he tumbled over that gate and broke his horse's neck?'—'Hurt?—not he—you wont often see *him* hurt—there are not many fellows so *hard* as Cropper' (great applause): and thus it seems that the brain is chiefly honoured according to its capacity, not of reasoning, but of cellarage—and the head only becomes the noblest portion of the human frame when it may be fallen on with impunity. Tell these 'physical force' gentlemen of a 'clever horse,' and every ear is erect in motionless attention—talk to them of a clever man, their shoulders are elevated in pity, of a clever woman, their mouths are drawn down in disgust. But Frank Hardingstone was, to use their favourite word, 'a great card' amongst all the associates of his age and standing. Square and muscular, with temper, courage, and address, he could walk, run, leap, ride, fence, play cricket, box, and swim with the best of them, and they never suspected that this powerful frame contained a mind capable and energetic as the casket in which it was concealed.

Frank was a well-informed, well-judging man—loved mathematics, logic, and such strong intellectual food—enjoyed working out a sum or problem, or otherwise exercising his powerful mind, and would go to an iron-foundry, or to see a ship built, or even

to the Polytechnic for sheer amusement. Had he been born to work for his livelihood, he would have made a capital engineer; as it was, he ought to have been in the navy, or the artillery, or anything but an idle man, living at his own place in the country. He had no relations, consequently nothing to keep him at home; people said, that when alone he had no established dinner-hour, a grievous sin in our gastronomic age; he was too energetic to care very much for farming, although he did *occupy* certain acres of his own land, and too practical to be enthusiastic about field-sports, though he was a good shot and rode right well to hounds. Altogether, Frank was out of his place in the world, and not having arrived at that age, when if a man don't fit his destiny, he makes his destiny fit *him*, was in danger of becoming bored and careless, and a useless member of society. Luckily, cousin Charlie's private tutor, Mr. Nobottle, held his Cure close to Hardingstone-hall, and leave to course over certain grounds thereunto belonging being applied for and granted, an introduction took place between the 'squire and the clergyman's volatile pupil, which struck up an immediate alliance of obliger and obliged.

No two people could well be more different in disposition and appearance than were Frank and Charlie. The man, strong, sedate, practical, acute, and penetrating; the boy, light, active, hot-headed, and romantic, jumping to conclusions, averse to

reasoning and reflection, acting on the impulse of the moment, and continually getting into scrapes, which his friend as continually had to get him out of. Yet after they had known each other a few months they became inseparable. Charlie went regularly after his studies at the Rectory, to pass the rest of the day at the Hall, and Frank found a renewed pleasure in boating, cricket, hunting, shooting, and even fishing, from the keen enjoyment with which 'the young one' entered upon these diversions. As for the 'young one' himself, he thought there was nothing in the world equal to Hardingstone—so strong, so plucky, so well-read, so sagacious, with such faultless coats, and such a good seat upon a horse, he was the boy's hero (we have all had such in our day), and he worshipped him accordingly. So ill could he bear to lose sight of his mentor, even during the sunshiny hours of the vacation, that he had begged Hardingstone to come over to St. Swithin's, no very great distance from his own place, and had promised to introduce him to the 'Aunt Kettering,' and 'Blanche,' of whom he had heard so much in the intervals of their amusements 'by thicket and by stream.' The promise was made and kept—and Frank was living at the Royal Hotel, disgusting the landlord by the simplicity of his habits, and the waiter by his carelessness as regarded dinner, whilst he was growing day by day in the good graces even of Mrs. Kettering, and finding,

as he himself thought with great penetration, a vast deal of sound merit in the fresh inexperienced mind of Blanche. 'Your cousin looks all the better for sea-bathing, Charlie,' said Hardingstone to his young companion, as they toiled slowly along the broiling parade, where every sunbeam was refracted with ten-fold power from glaring houses and a scorching pavement. 'It braces the system just as good head-work braces the intellect. People don't train half enough, I think—even women ought to have sound minds in sound bodies, and look what indolent, unmeaning, insipid wretches half of them are—not like your aunt—now that's what I call a vigorous woman, Charlie, she'd do in the colonies or anywhere—she's fit to be a queen, my boy, because she's got some energy about her. As for you, young gentleman, you work hard enough out-of-doors, but you neglect your brains altogether—I don't believe now that you have opened a book since you left Nobottle's.'

'Wrong again, Frank, as usual,' replied Charlie; 'I read for an hour this very morning, whilst I was dressing; I am very fond of reading when it's not *dry*.'

'And may I ask what your early studies were, my industrious young philosopher?'

'*Parisina* and *The Bride of Abydos*—by Jove, old fellow, it's beautiful.'

Frank made a face as if he had swallowed a pill. '*Parisina* and *The Bride of Abydos*,' he repeated with

intense disgust; 'a boy of sixteen—I beg your pardon—a young *man* of your age reading Byron; why, you'll arrive at a state of mental delirium tremens before you are twenty, particularly if you smoke much at the same time. I dare say you are 'up' in *Don Juan* as well, not that I think *he* is half so bad for you; but no man should read sentiment in such an alluring garb as Byron dressed it, till his heart is hardened and his whiskers grown. All poetry, to my mind, has a tendency to make you more or less imbecile. You should read Bacon, my boy, and Locke, and good sound reasoning Butler; but if you must have works of imagination, take to Milton.'

'Hate blank verse,' remarked Charlie, who opined —in which prejudice we cannot help coinciding a little—that poetry is nothing without jingle; 'I can't read three pages of *Paradise Lost*.'

'Because your brain is softening for want of proper training,' interupted Hardingstone; 'if you go on like this, you'll very soon be fit for Jean Jaques Rousseau, and I shall give you up altogether; no, when you go back to Nobottle's, I shall give him a hint to put you into a stiffish course of mathematics, with a few logarithms for plums, and when you are man enough to grapple with a real intellectual difficulty, you will read Milton for pleasure, and like him more and more every day, for you will find——'

'Oh! bother Milton,' interrupted Charlie; 'Frank I'll bet you half-a-crown you don't jump that gate

without touching,' and he pointed to a high white gate leading off the dusty road into the fresh green meadows, for they were now clear of the town.

Frank was over it like a bird, ere the words were out of his admiring disciple's mouth, and their conversation, as they walked on, turned upon feats of strength and agility, and those actions of enterprise and adventure which are ever most captivating to the fancy of the young.

Charles Kettering, we need scarcely say, entertained an extraordinary fondness for all bodily exercises. Intended for the army, and 'waiting for his commission,' as he expressed it, he looked forward to his future profession as a career of unalloyed happiness, in which he should win fame and distinction without the slightest mental exertion, an effort to which, in truth, Charlie was always rather averse. Like most young aspirants to military honours, he had yet to learn that study, reflection, memory, and above all, common sense, are as indispensable to the soldier's success as to that of any other professional man, and that, although physical courage and light spirits are very useful accessories in a campaign, a good deal more is required to constitute an officer, since even in a subordinate grade the lives of his comrades and the safety of his division may depend on his unassisted judgment alone. Charlie had good abilities, but it was a difficult matter to get him to apply them with anything like diligence, and his

friend Hardingstone, whose appreciation of a favourite's good qualities never made him blind to his faults, saw this defect, and did all in his power to remedy it, both by precept and example.

Mrs. Kettering's misgivings as regarded her nephew's duck-like propensities were founded on a thorough knowledge of his tastes and habits. Another mile of walking brought the pair once more to the beach, where it curved away completely out of sight of St. Swithin's. The heat was intense; Charlie took his coat off, sat down upon a stone, and gazed wistfully at the sea.

'Don't it look cool?' said he, 'and don't I wish, on a day like this, that I was 'a merman bold?' I say, Frank, I *must* have a dip—I shall bundle in.'

'In with you, was the reply;' 'I haven't had a swim since I breasted the Mediterranean last year; only we won't stay in too long, for I promised your cousin to bring her some of that sea-weed she spoke about;' and in another minute, in place of two well-dressed gentlemen standing on the beach, a couple of hats and a heap of clothes occupied the shore, whilst two white forms might be seen, ever and anon, gleaming through the blue waves as their owners dived, floated, turned upon their sides, kicked up their feet, and performed all those antics with which masterly swimmers signalize their enjoyment of their favourite element. We often hear people wishing they could fly. Now, we always think it must be

exactly the same sensation as swimming; you are borne up with scarcely an effort—you seem to glide with the rapidity of a bird—you feel a consciousness of daring, and a proud superiority over nature in thus mastering the instinctive fear man doubtless entertains of water, and bidding ocean bear you like a steed that knows its rider.' The horizon appears so near that your ideas of distance become entirely confused, and the 'few yards of uneven' water seem to your exulting senses like as many leagues. You dash your head beneath the green transparent wave, and shaking the salt drops from your brow, gallantly breast roller after roller, as they come surging in, and with a wild, glad sense of freedom and adventure, you strike boldly out to sea. All this our two gentlemen-bathers felt and enjoyed, but Frank, who had not followed this favourite diversion for a length of time, was even more delighted than his young companion with his aquatic amusements, and when the breeze freshened and the dark blue waters began to show a curl of white, he dashed away with long, vigorous strokes to such a distance from the shore, as even Charlie, albeit of anything but nervous mood, thought over-venturous and enterprising. The latter was emerging from the water, when, on looking for his companion, it struck him that Frank, in the offing, was making signals of distress. Once he saw a tremendous splash, and he almost thought he heard a cry through the roar of the tide against

the shingle. 'By all that's fearful, he's in grief,' was Charlie's mental exclamation, and whilst he thought it the gallant boy was striking out for life and death to reach his friend. What a distance it seemed! and how his knees and thighs ached with the long, convulsive springs that shot him forward. Charlie never knew before what hard work swimming might be; and now he has reached the spot he aimed at—he raises himself in the water—what is this? Merciful Heaven! Hardingstone is down! but there is a swirling circle of green and white not ten yards before him, and the lad dives deep below the surface and comes up holding his friend's motionless body by the hair; and now they are both down again, for Charlie is blown, and has not before practised the difficult feat of rescuing a man from drowning. But he comes up once more, and shakes his head, and coughs and clutches tightly to the twining hair, that even in the water has a death-like clamminess in his fingers. He is frightfully blown now, and a wave takes him sideways and turns him over—he is under Hardingstone, and this time he only comes up for an instant to go under again, with a suffocating feeling at his chest, and a painful pressure on his ears. How he gulps at the salt water that appears to fill body, and lungs, and head; and now he seems to be whirling round and round; everything is green and giddy—there is something crooked before his face—and a feeling

of pleasing languor forbids him to grasp it. The Great Uncertainty is very near—a glare of white light dazzles his eyes, and the waters settle over him, as he holds on to Hardingstone's hair with the clutch of a drowning man.

CHAPTER III.

The Handsome Governess.

BLINDMAN'S BUFF—AN UNCEREMONIOUS INTRODUCTION—THE MUSIC-MISTRESS—A CATHEDRAL TOWN—THE YOUNG LADY'S SEMINARY—MARY DELAVAL AND HER ADMIRER—AN ATTACK REPULSED—THE MILITARY ROUTED—A PRECARIOUS LIVELIHOOD.

LITTLE, indeed, do one half the world know how the other half live. Fortunate is it for us all, that we have neither the invisible cap, nor the shoes of swiftness that did their owner such good service in the fairy tale. We might be astonished, not to say disgusted, could we follow our nearest and dearest for one short half-hour after they have left our sight; could we see them, when they think no mortal eye is upon their actions, we might smile or we might weep, according as our temperament bordered upon the sentimental or the cynical. Yet is there One that always watches.—How comes it that when we hide ourselves from man, we think no shame to expose our follies to man's Creator? Will a day come when everything shall be made known? when

there will be no more hypocrisy—no more respectability—no more difference between vice on the house-top and vice in the corner? There will be some strange shifting of places when that day does come—much shrinking and wincing from the general Show-up—much scarlet shame, and livid remorse, when the brow can no more be covered nor the Past undone. 'Tis a pity we should think so little of payment till the bill comes due;—in the mean time we go blindly on, deceiving and deceived—we know but little of our neighbour, and we trust in heaven our neighbour knows nothing whatever about us, so we grope about in the dark, and call it Life.

Mrs. Kettering, on the sofa, knew nothing of what Blanche was thinking about, not six feet from her—knew nothing about Charlie, struggling convulsively for life half-a-mile out at sea—knew nothing about the woman she had left to take charge of her town-house, a pattern of respectability, sobriety, and trustworthiness, then reeling out of 'The Feathers' as drunk as Chloë, to use an old Eton expression, highly derogatory to the character of Horace's young and tender love, she who bounded from the bard's classical advances like a frightened kid. Our Chloë, meanwhile, was grasping a door-key, and calling for gin, regardless that she had left a tallow-candle flaring close to a heap of shavings in the back-scullery, that the 'airy-gate,' as she called it, was 'on

the latch,' and there was nobody to answer the front-door. This last piece of carelessness was the means of inflicting an additional disappointment on one who had already in her short life known troubles and disappointments more than enough. Mary Delaval had walked up to the grim lion-headed knocker with a weary step and a heavy heart; but when her summons was again and again unheeded, and the chance of finding out even Mrs. Kettering's address became hopeless, she moved away with the heavy listless air of one who has shot the last arrow from the quiver without attaining the mark, and begins to doubt if courage and energy are indeed qualities of the slightest advantage to our welfare, and whether blind Fortune is not the comptroller of all here below.

The sun beat fiercely upon the pavement, and there was not a breath of air to refresh those arid gardens in the parched and dusty square—yet Mary put her thick suffocating veil down before her face and quickened her pace as she went home from her hopeless errand; for to these inconveniences she was obliged to submit, because in the freest country in the world, and the most civilized capital in Europe, she was walking on foot, without a companion or a man-servant.

'Gad, that's a good-looking woman!' said Captain Lacquers to his friend, Sir Ascot Uppercrust; 'fine-ish goer too, but tires over the pavement—if it

wasn't so cursedly hot, 'Uppy,' we might cross over and get a look at her.'

'Women rather bore me,' replied Sir Ascot, who being *very* young and a body-guardsman, was of course *blasé*,—'but I don't mind, to oblige you,—only promise you won't let her speak to me.' So, as Captain Lacquers turned up his moustaches, Sir Ascot went through the same pantomime, for practice against the time when his own should grow; and the couple sauntered carelessly on, and, by a dexterous manœuvre, came 'right across the bows' of Mary Delaval.

We may be asked what two such undeniable dandies, as good-looking Lacquers, of the Lancers, and Sir Ascot Uppercrust of the Body-guard, should be doing in London at this time of the year. We cannot tell—for love or money probably—a redundancy of the one and a deficiency of the other, being the two causes that generally drive young gentlemen to the metropolis, when their confiding companions are all 'faded and gone.' Be it how it may, there they were, and Mary Delaval wished them anywhere else, as following in her wake, they made sundry complimentary remarks upon her figure, ankles, and general appearance, which might have been gratifying if overheard casually, but which, under the circumstances, were doubtless extremely impertinent and reprehensible.

'I think I'll get forward, and ask her if she's going

home,' said Lacquers; and, curling his great black moustaches, he quickened his pace to add this crowning insult to an unprotected woman.

Mary's blood boiled in her veins, — she was a soldier's daughter, and her father's spirit swelled her heart till it felt as if it would choke her,—she clenched her long slender hand, and thought almost aloud: 'Oh, if I were but a man to strike the coward to the earth!—oh, if I were but a man to shoot him as he stands!' In such a mood women have shed blood ere now, but the excitement cannot last—the reaction too surely arrives; and, alas for woman's pride and woman's weakness! Mary returned the bold insolent stare with the defiant glance and the lofty carriage of a queen, and then—she burst into tears. It was too much, fatigue, anxiety, and disappointment had overcome her nerves, and she could have killed herself for the weakness, but she sobbed like a child.

Lacquers was a good-natured man, and a good fellow, as it is called, at heart—he was pained and thoroughly ashamed of himself. He took his hat off as if she had been a duchess, and with a readiness that argued this was not a first offence, and did more credit to his ingenuity than his candour, he begged her pardon, and assured her he thought she was 'his cousin'—'quite a mistake, ma'am, I assure you —pray forgive me—good morning;' and so bowed himself off arm-in-arm with his companion, who

had preserved an immovable stoicism, almost preternatural in one so young, during the whole interview.

As Mary Delaval walked on, and gradually recovered her composure, she reflected somewhat bitterly on her lot, and looked back upon her life with a feeling of discontent, that for a moment seemed almost to upbraid Providence that she had not had a fair chance. It was but for a moment—Mary had been schooled in adversity, and had profited by its lessons. In some situations of life such a temperament as hers might have been prone to grow fastidious and uncharitable. Her ideal of good would have been very high, and she would have looked down with contempt upon the grovelling spirits that constituted the mass of her fellow-creatures. But poverty and dependance had taught her many a lesson, hard to learn, but harder to forget. What had she to do with pride?—a question to be asked, if you contemplated her tall graceful figure, with its majestic sweep and lofty gestures. Her goddess-like head set on as if the Greek had carved its proportions with his unerring chisel. Her dark, deep-set, gray eye, with its long lashes, veiling a world of penetration, reflection, ay, and sentiment, for the happy man who could bid it kindle into love—her faultless profile and firm determined mouth, her father's legacy, with the courage it betokened—her low, loveable brow, with its masses of thick dark

brown hair plainly braided on each side of that pale haunting face, beautiful in the deep expression which arrives only with the maturity of womanhood—with all this she might have been a queen—yet what had she to do with pride?—a question not to be asked of a friendless, desolate woman, trudging along the streets in the dreary isolation of loneliness in London, wasting her beauty in the strife for bread, wearing her talents threadbare in the drudgery of a daily music-mistress. What a lot if there were nothing beyond! To rise early in that dingy atmosphere—to breakfast hurriedly on such a spare meal as the ladies'-maid next door would deem insufficient for her mistress's poodle—to leave the dreary lodging for the scarce less dreary street, day after day, to make the same round, waiting upon vulgar parents and stupid children—day after day to bend rebellious fingers over the soul-breathing chords —to dissect the harmony of heaven, into 'one—two —three—four,' 'one—two—three—four,'—and day after day to return, wearied out in body and mind, to the solitary room which cannot be called a home, and the rent of which, dear on account of *the situation,* swallows up the hard-earned coins that should decorate and supply its vacuity, with nothing to cheer, nothing to amuse, nothing to console, not even the consciousness of that beauty which is only a cause of annoyance and remark, and above all with nothing to love—what a lot would this be, were

there not a something to look forward to—a humble hope that this is but a state of trial and probation—a humble confidence that the reward is sure to come at last!

And who was Mary Delaval? One of the many instances of a child suffering for the sins of its parents. We have said her father was a soldier, but, alas! her mother never was, properly speaking, Mrs. Delaval. Poor woman, she committed her one fault, and dearly she atoned for it. She shut the door upon herself, and her sex took good care that it should never again show a chink open to let her in. Trust them for that! she was not a proper person to be visited, and she remained outside. Captain Delaval would have married her, had he thought such a sacrifice on his part would have improved her position, for he loved her dearly; but he knew it could be of no use, in a worldly point of view, the only one in which he considered the subject, so he put it off and put it off, till too late. She never complained of the injustice done her, but it broke her heart. Rich in beauty and accomplishments, she had run away with the handsome young artillery officer, rather than be forced into a match which she detested, by a step-mother she despised. She had but one child, and on that child, it is needless to say, she doted foolishly. Delaval was a curious fellow, easy-tempered to a fault, careless of the world's opinion, and of everything but his own comfort and indulgences; a gallant

soldier, notwithstanding, as brave as a lion, and a perfect authority in the code of honour, adopted by his profession. Yet, for all this, he allowed the mother of his child to go upon the stage, under a feigned name, that he might live in luxury upon her earnings. Fortunately, it may be for all parties, the artillery officer caught cold out duck-shooting, and was honoured with a military funeral some ten days afterwards. He left all he had, a small pittance, to the woman he had so deeply injured, and she retired with her daughter into a humble cottage, in the West of England, where, for a time, they lived as happy as the day is long. Her whole energies were devoted to the education of her child. She taught her all she had herself learned, no mean list of acquirements, and young Mary Delaval (for, by the deceased officer's wish, they always bore his name) was skilled far beyond other girls of her age in the graceful accomplishments of womanhood, as well as in those deeper studies which strengthen the mind, and form the character of youth. But Mary's girlhood had an advantage, in which her mother's was deficient. That mother, with the earnestness of one into whose soul the iron had deeply entered, impressed upon her daughter the lesson she had herself so painfully learned; 'Put not your trust in man,' was the substance of many a tearful entreaty, many a sage homily, from the repentant sinner to her innocent child; and, though the girl's faith was

sadly shaken in the integrity of the creature, it was anchored all the more firmly in reliance on his Creator. The mother's health was but precarious. Often she thought 'What will become of Mary when I must leave her alone in the world?' and, having little else to bestow, she bequeathed to her darling that best legacy of all, the heritage of an immortal soul. Poor thing! her own constitution had been sadly broken by anxiety and disappointment, and the heart-wearing conviction that she had given up home, comfort, friends, good fame, everything, to fasten her young pure love on an unworthy object. Oh the sickening misery of that moment, when first the idol's shrine is found to be a blank! when first the dreary misgiving dawns upon us, that the being for whom we have sacrificed our earthly all, and offered it with a smile—whom we have endued with all the attributes for which our own heart yearns—whom we have clothed with the gorgeous colouring of fancy, and decked in the false glitter of our own imagination,—whom we have raised upon a pedestal, to place our neck beneath its feet, is but a stock or a stone, after all! Poor idolaters! are we not rightly punished? Have we not exalted man to be our God? and shall we worship the thing of clay with impunity? No, the very crime is made to bear its own atonement. Better that we should bow down to the dust, with crushed and empty hearts, than live on in the vain mockery of a false worship, in

the degradation of a soul's homage to a mortal deity.

Poor Mrs. Delaval (for as such was the penitent lady known) bore her punishment without a murmur; but it was a sad task to leave Mary among strangers, when failing strength and wasting limbs warned her that she must soon depart. The girl was in the first lovely bloom of womanhood, bright and beautiful as if she had never known sorrow or self-denial, and must she leave her now, when most she wants a mother's care? God's will be done! There is a humble grave, in the corner of a retired churchyard, far away in the West, marked by a plain grey stone, and the initial letters of a name; nothing more; and there the spring daisies are growing over the head of one who loved not wisely,—who erred, and was forgiven, but not here.

Mary Delaval was left to fight single-handed against the world. A hard battle it is, for those who are not furnished with the sinews of war.

The small sum bequeathed to her by her mother's care, was invested in a savings' bank, *which failed*. By the way, the failure was casually mentioned in the morning papers, and trustees of savings' banks, as they sipped their coffee, remarked, 'Ah! another of these concerns broke: gross rascality somewhere, no doubt.' We hope it proved a warning to them, to look a little carefully into affairs which they had pledged themselves to superintend, and not to grudge

half an hour's labour, when such a trifling effort might ward off the direst calamities from their humble neighbours. What was Mary to do? Besides her beauty and the mourning on her back, she had literally nothing. And yet the girl's heart never sank for a moment; she was possessed of that invincible Anglo-Saxon resolution, for which there is no better name than the colloquial one of 'pluck.' Had she been a man, she would have distinguished herself; as it was, perhaps the humble part she had to play required more courage, self-command, and self-reliance than the career of many a hero. One advantage she had, over many others equally indigent, her talents were brilliant, her education had been excellent, and the natural conclusion at which she arrived was, that she must be a governess or teacher in a school. The former situation there was much difficulty in attaining, qualities which are prized in a lady being considered great drawbacks to a governess; but youth and good looks are not so much out of place in the latter, and Mary, after considerable difficulty, and a voluminous correspondence, found herself installed as second assistant in one of those strongholds of innocence and propriety, termed a young ladies' seminary.

How different the life on which the orphan now embarked, from all her previous experience of the world! She had been a merry little girl, in barracks, petted by officers, from every regiment in the service

(soldiers are all fond of children), and spoilt by papa, who thought nothing in the world equal to his little pet. She had grown into womanhood in the closest retirement of a small out-of-the-way village, associating only with her refined and cultivated mother, and preparing for a life of difficulty, by study and reflection; and now she found herself the inmate of a house in which there were thirty pupils, and where she had not even a room of her own, to escape from the gossipping chatter of the girls, or the solemn platitudes of Miss Primrose, the venerable Calypso who presided over these isolated nymphs. There never was such a place for ladies' schools as the cathedral town of Bishops'-Baffler; but, as we believe these repositories of beauty and education are conducted upon the same principles, it is needless to describe them. Health and morals are studiously attended to, and the use of the back-board inflexibly insisted on, the male sex, of course, strictly prohibited, and the arts and sciences, giving the former the preference, impartially administered. Young ladies are likewise taught to lie perfectly flat on their backs for several hours, we may say, literally, on a stretch, though of the object and intention of this feat, whether it is viewed in the light of a dreary penance, an innocent recreation, or a time-honoured institution, it does not become us, in our ignorance, to give an opinion.

But Bishops'-Baffler, with all its advantages of salubrious air, constant bell-ringing, and redundancy

of ecclesiastics, has one considerable drawback to to those who take upon themselves the responsible charge of young ladies in the vicinity of a cavalry barracks. The morals of a cathedral town are not very easily deteriorated; but an order from the Horse Guards determining that a certain number of jaunty forage-caps, jingling spurs, and dyed moustaches, should be continually swaggering up and down the principal thoroughfares of any city, though it adds to the liveliness, is not supposed to conduce much to the general respectability of the place; and with all our terrors of invasion, and our admiration, as civilians, of the military character—particularly the mounted arm—we confess to a partiality for it chiefly when removed beyond flirting distance from our dwelling-house, and acknowledge with grief and shame that its vicinity, in our own experience, has invariably over-roasted our mutton, multiplied our cobwebs, and placed our female establishment generally at sixes and sevens. But if we, an independent bachelor, are thus fain to be removed from the insidious sounds of 'stable-call' and 'watch-setting,' from the fascinating sights of 'watering-order' and 'guard-mounting,' what must have been good Miss Primrose's care and anxiety to preserve her tender fledgings from the roving glances of those dashing sergeant-majors, far more brilliant warriors than the very lieutenants and captains of the sober foot regiment that preceded them, or the dangerous proximity of

those good-looking officers in their braided frock-coats and their well-cultivated moustaches, which serve equally as an amusement to themselves and a terror to their foes,—a defence in war, and an occupation in peace? Miss Primrose was a large woman; but she ought to have been a giantess to cover her brood, as she would have wished, when, walking two-and-two along the pavement, they were continually encountering 'the Loyal Hussars,' mounted and dismounted, or entangling in the very sheep-fold of their innocence some wolf in undress uniform, who would persist in taking the wrong side of the 'trottoir,' and then jingling his spurs together in feigned apologies, merely, Miss Primrose well knew, as a pretext for peeping under their parasols and 'uglies' at the pretty faces, blushing not in anger beneath those defences.

But what made the principal of the establishment, as she called herself, more wrathful than anything else, was to perceive that the figure on whom these warlike glances rested with the greatest marks of approval and admiration, was not one of the young ladies upon whom she 'lavished a mother's care, and conferred a gentlewoman's education' (see advertisement) —not one of the lady pupils for whom she felt, as she expressed it, 'she was responsible, body and soul,' but the majestic person, and the sweet sad face of the junior assistant, Mary Delaval! 'Had it been myself, for instance,' thought Miss Primrose,

drawing up her ample frame with a proud consciousness that, twenty years ago, she, too, had a lover, 'or even Miss Meagrim' (the senior assistant, a gaunt and forbidding damsel), 'who certainly has a 'genteel' figure, or little Miss Dashwood, or rosy Miss Wright, I could have understood it; but the idea of that dowdy thing, with her pale face and her shabby mourning! it only shows the extraordinary tastes men have, and the unaccountable creatures they are from beginning to end.'

And so poor Miss Primrose fell to ruminating on certain passages of her own early career, and a blight which nipped her young affections in the bud, through the inconstancy of man.

'Have you served?' says a Frenchman to his acquaintance. 'Have you suffered?' might women as well ask of each other; and there are few amongst them, we fancy, but at one time of their lives have gone through the Freemasonry of sorrow.

Miss Primrose did not look like a heroine; yet she, too, had had her romance. Well, it had softened her character, for naturally she was a strong-minded woman, and the pretty gipsies over whom she presided little thought how much that austere lady sympathised with all the innocent '*espièglerie*' and girlish follies she thought it right to rebuke so severely.

Now, even Miss Primrose could not help remarking, that notwithstanding the open admiration Mary

Delaval everywhere excited, no London beauty of half-a-dozen seasons, could have accepted the homage due to her charms with greater coldness and carelessness, than did the junior assistant. The girl seemed to live in a separate world of her own, apart from the common pleasures and foibles of her sex. She was kind and courteous to all, but she made no confidences, and had no female friend. She continued to wear her mourning-dress for years after the usual term that filial affection imposes, and with that mourning she seemed to bear about with her the continual memory, almost the companionship, of her dead mother. Even Miss Meagrim, whom she nursed through the jaundice, and who, with returning health, and a fresh accession of hideousness, confessed she owed her life to Miss Delaval's care, owned that she could not make her out; and truth to tell, both that inquisitive lady and the formidable Miss Primrose herself were a little afraid of their stately assistant, with her classical beauty and her calm sad face.

Years rolled on, and Mary Delaval, now in the mature bloom of womanhood, was still junior-assistant at Miss Primrose's, and might have remained there till her glorious figure was bent, and her glossy braids were grey, had it not been for that order from the Horse Guards, mentioned above, which moved the head-quarters of 'the Loyal Hussars' from Water-bridge to Bishops'-Baffler. Much commotion

was there in the town when this regiment of '*Cupidons*' in pelisses marched in with all the honours of war; nor were the chaste retreats of our academical sanctuary entirely free from the excitement that pervaded the neighbourhood. Miss Primrose had her 'front' freshly oiled, curled, and submitted to a process which we believe is termed 'baking;' Miss Meagrim appeared with new ribbons in her cap, of a hue strangely unbecoming to her complexion; whilst a general feeling amongst the pupils in favour of 'a walk,' whenever the weather afforded an opportunity, argued that the attraction, whatever it might be, was decidedly out-of-doors. Mary Delaval alone seemed supremely indifferent to the movements of the military, and yet her destiny it was that the arrival of these gaudy warriors influenced in a manner she of all people could least have foreseen.

We have said that of the usual pleasures of her kind she was utterly careless, but there was one enjoyment of which Mary never wearied, and in which she lost no opportunity of indulging when she could do so without attracting observation. This was, listening to a military band. It reminded her of her childhood,—it reminded her of her mother, and she could stand entranced by its sounds for hours. In the gardens where the band played, there used to be a porter's lodge, kept by an old fruit-woman, much patronised by the Primrose establishment, and with this ancient Pomona Mary made interest to

occupy her little secluded parlour, and listen to the music, whenever her school duties permitted the indulgence. Now it happened that one sunny afternoon, when Mary, in her usual sombre attire, was snugly enjoying from her hiding-place the harmonious efforts of 'The Loyals,' a certain wealthy manufacturer's lady was seized with a *physical* giddiness as she promenaded in the gardens, and Captain D'Orville, *the* great card of the regiment, came clanking into the porter's lodge to get a glass of water for the dame, upon whom he was in close attendance. Mary was eager to assist in a case of distress, and the Captain, an avowed admirer of beauty, was completely staggered by the apparition he encountered in place of the grimy old woman he had expected to find within. D'Orville was a gentleman of experience, and, as became a man of war, fertile in resources. He spilt half the tumbler of water over Mary's black gown, which *coup-de-main* gave him an opportunity of excusing himself at length for his awkwardness, and prolonging his interview with the beautiful woman he had so unexpectedly fallen in with. The next day came a magnificent dress, and a note full of apologies, couched in the most respectful language, and addressed *Mrs.* Delaval. 'I wonder how he found me out,' thought Mary, 'and why he did not put *Miss*.' There was no signature to the note, and it was impossible to send the dress back, so she folded it in her drawer,

and wondered what she ought to do, and what her mother would have advised. After this, wherever Mary went, there was Captain D'Orville; at church, in her school-walks, when she went out with Miss Primrose,—he seemed to have an intuitive knowledge of her movements, and never to lose an opportunity of gazing at her. Mary was a woman after all; she thought it was 'very disagreeable,' yet was the excitement not altogether unpleasing. Gaston D'Orville was strikingly handsome, in fact, generally considered, 'the best-looking fellow in the Loyals,' with a peculiar charm of manner, and a thorough knowledge of the whole art, method, and practice of war as carried on against the weaker sex. What chance had the friendless teacher's heart against such a conqueror? This—there was no treachery in the citadel; there was no gratified vanity to be the enemy's best auxiliary; no trifling pique nor unworthy jealousy to make a conquest valuable merely as a conquest: Mary was one of the few women who can see things as they are, and not through the glasses of their own imagination or prejudice; and when she came to know him better, she perceived the hollow selfishness of the hardened man of the world, with a perspicuity of which he would have supposed 'the handsome governess' totally incapable. That she *should* know him better he took good care, but his advances were so well-timed, so respectful, and in such thoroughly good taste, that it was impossible to

take umbrage at them, and Mary found herself, she scarce knew how, meeting Captain D'Orville, *by accident*, walking with him as far as the end of the street, amused by his conversation, and interested in his character, before she had time to think where or how she had made his acquaintance, and in what manner such an acquaintance was likely to end. And D'Orville himself was really in love, in his own way, with 'the handsome governess.'

'There is no fool like an old one,' he confided to his friend Lacquers, of the Lancers, in an epistle addressed to that philosopher at Brussels,—'If I were a 'marrying man,' which you well know I am *not*, I should spend the rest of my life, unjust as would be the monopoly, with this glorious Mrs. Delaval. I always call her by that matronly title, it is so much more respectful, and must make her feel so much more independent. She is only a teacher, my dear fellow, a teacher in a girls' school, and yet for dignity and grace, and real 'high-bred' manner, she might be a duchess. Such a foot and hand! I can take my oath she has good blood in her veins. Altogether, she reminds me of your old mare, Sultana, as beautiful as a star, and looks as if she would die rather than give in. I never in my life saw a woman I admired half so much; you know I am generally pretty hard-hearted, but upon my word I begin to fear I have a soft place in me somewhere. And then, my dear Lacquers, what makes the thing so exciting is

this,—I do not believe she cares one toss of a half-penny for me after all, and that if I were fool enough to offer to marry her to-morrow, she would quietly balance the advantages and disadvantages of the plan, and accept or very likely *refuse* me, with her calm, condescending dignity, extremely unflattering as it is, and without moving a muscle of her beautiful, placid countenance. Don't she wish she may have the chance? and yet, absurd as it sounds, I am horribly in love with her. You will laugh at me 'consumedly,' and sometimes I feel half inclined to laugh at myself, dodging about this stupidest of places, as deeply smitten as if I were a cornet, regretting I ever came here, and yet not man enough to leave, and go on detachment, which I have the option of doing. I shall see her again this evening, and come to a decision one way or the other, for this can't go on. In the meantime don't show me up to a soul, and believe me,' etc.

That very evening, a tall, good-looking man, in undress uniform, might have been seen, as indeed he was seen by Miss Primrose's housemaid, walking a magnificent grey charger with its bridle over his arm, close to the foot-pavement in Crozier-street, deep in what seemed an interesting conversation with a beautiful woman in black.

'So you don't believe we unfortunates ever *are* disinterested, Mrs. Delaval?—I am afraid you have a very bad opinion of the whole sex,' said the gentleman,

with a slight tremor in his voice, extremely unusual to him, and contrasting strangely with the steady, measured tones of his companion.—'I cannot give an opinion where I have so little knowledge, Captain D'Orville,' was the reply: she began to know him well now, and liked to talk *out* with him, as a woman never does with a man for whom she cares—'I can only judge by what I see. It appears to me that you all live wholly and entirely for yourselves. If you are clever, you pervert your talents to get the better of your friends in every allowable species of dishonesty; if you are brave, your courage is but made subservient to your vanity and self-aggrandizement. If you are rich, your money is devoted to your own indulgence, and your own purposes. I never hear, now-a-days, of anything noble, anything disinterested, such as I have read of—but I am talking great nonsense,' said Mary, checking herself, and smiling at her own enthusiasm, unconscious of the burning admiration with which the hussar's eyes were rivetted on her face. Like all *fast*, reckless men, there was a spice of romance about D'Orville, and he liked to bring out the latent powers of a mind somewhat akin to his own daring intellect, more particularly when that mind belonged to such a person as his companion.

'I could prove that men *may* be disinterested, even in the nineteenth century,' said he, and again his voice trembled as it sank almost to a whisper—'that

there *are* men who would give up station, profession, ambition, everything,—the present they enjoy, and the future they look forward to,—for the sake of one whom they esteemed—admired—in short, whom they *loved.*' She would not understand him, and the calm brow was as calm as ever while she answered—'I cannot think so. I have seen quite enough as a child, for you know I am half a soldier myself, to give me no inclination to prosecute my studies in human nature. And yet I have my ideal of a hero too, but in these days there no is such character as a Leonidas, a Curtius (you know we governesses must not forget our history), a William Tell, or a Montrose.'

'I'll wear thy colours in my cap, thy picture next my heart,' muttered D'Orville, and then, carried away by the impulse of the moment, and forgetful of all his worldly prudence and good resolutions, he hurried impetuously on—'Listen to me, Mrs. Delaval; I may be presumptuous to speak thus to you on such short acquaintance, but you must have seen my regard—my attention—my devotion; I cannot bear to see you wasted here, thrown away in such a place as this—you who are meant for society and brilliancy, and every thing that is worth having in life. Will you rely upon *me?* will you suffer me to rescue you from this obscure lot: will you consider?'—Mary stopped dead short, drew herself up, and looked her admirer full in the face:—'I am so unused to this

sort of language, Captain D'Orville,' she observed, without a vestige of emotion, 'that I do not clearly understand you. If what you have to say is fit for me to hear, pray explain yourself; if not, I wish you a good evening;' and pausing for an instant while she kept him, as it were, 'chained in her eye,' she turned round, and walked calmly and deliberately straight home to Miss Primrose's.

The hussar was completely taken aback by the simplicity with which his attack had been repulsed. There he stood opposite the grey horse, utterly confounded, and not knowing whether to advance or retreat. Should he laugh the thing off, and descend to the meanness of pretending he had been in jest? He could not, no, he *dared* not meet that calm, contemptuous eye. What an eye it was, and how he felt its influence even now! Should he hurry after her, and make a *bonâ fide* proposal of marriage, such as no woman could receive but as a compliment. Psha! what, marry a governess? What would the mess say, and Lacquers, and his brother profligates? No, the good grey horse was galloped back to barracks and D'Orville was the life and soul of a supper-party, which he returned just in time to join. What a contrast it was, with its brilliant lights, flushed countenances, noise, excitement, and revelry, to the still summer evening, and the pure sweet face of Mary Delaval.

The wealthy manufacturer's lady thought Captain D'Orville very absent and distrait next day in the

gardens, but from that time till he went on leave he devoted himself exclusively to her service, and she never dreamed that there was such a being in the world as the handsome governess at Miss Primrose's, or the loss that establishment had sustained in its junior assistant's departure.

And now Mary had been long dragging on her weary existence as a music-mistress in London. Miss Primrose's severe comments on the impropriety of evening walks with cavalry officers led to a dignified rejoinder from her teacher, and the conversation terminated in a small arrear of salary being paid up, and Mary's wardrobe (with the exception of a certain very handsome dress, afterwards sold cheap as 'returned') being packed for travelling. In London she obtained sufficient employment to keep her from starving, and that was about all. A situation as 'Governess in a private family' was advertised for, and again and again she was disappointed in obtaining one, till at length hearing accidentally that Mrs. Kettering was in want of a 'finishing governess' for Blanche, Mary Delaval proceeded to the town-house, to make inquiries, and failing to obtain even the wished-for address, was returning in hopeless despondency when she encountered the impertinencies we have already detailed, and which were alone wanting to fill the bitter cup of dependency to overflowing. Poor Mary! hers was 'a black cloud' through which it was indeed difficult to see 'the silver lining.'

CHAPTER IV.

'Libitina.'

THE DROWNING MAN CATCHES AT A BOAT-HOOK—A BRITISH FISHERMAN—THE MOTHER STRUCK DOWN—THE SICK-ROOM—WATCH AND WARD—THE VISITOR THAT WILL NOT BE DENIED—A PRESSING SUITOR—THE CHIEF MOURNER.

TO keep a gentleman waiting any length of time, either in hot water or cold, is decidedly a breach of the laws of politeness, to repair which we must return as speedily as possible to 'Cousin Charlie' and his friend, lying somewhat limp and blue at the bottom of 'Hairblower's' dingy; this worthy, under Providence, having been the means of saving the rash swimmer and the gallant boy who strove to rescue him from an untimely death, which a very few seconds more of submersion would have made a certainty. That Hairblower's boat-hook should have been ready at the nick of time was one of those 'circumstances,' as he called them, which he designated 'special,' and turned upon the fact of his having started a party of amateurs in the morning on a sort of marine pic-nic, from which they had returned prematurely, the gala proving a failure, with no greater loss than that of a spare oar and

one or two small casks belonging to the seaman. It was on the hopeless chance of picking up these 'waifs and strays' as they drifted down with the tide, that 'Hairblower' was paddling about in a shallow skiff, denominated 'a dingy,' when his attention was arrested by an adventurous swimmer striking boldly out at a long distance from the beach. As he said himself, 'There's no depending on these gentlemen, so I thought it very likely I might be wanted, and stood 'off and on' till I saw Mr. Hardingstone making signals of distress. It's no joke that cramp isn't, half-a-mile out at sea; and I might have been too late with the boat-hook if it hadn't been for Master Charles—dear, dear, there's stuff in that lad you might cut an admiral out of, and they're going to make 'a soger' of him!'

He had contrived to pull the two exhausted swimmers into his little craft, and although Charlie very soon recovered himself, his friend, who was farther gone in his salt water potations, gave them both some uneasiness before he came thoroughly to his senses.

Whilst our hardy seaman is putting them upon their legs, and administering hot brandy-and-water, in a fisherman's house near the beach, we may spare a few lines to give some account of 'Hairblower,' and the qualities by which he earned that peculiar designation. Born and bred a fisherman, one of that daring race with which our sea-board swarms, and

from which her Majesty's navy and the British merchant-service recruit their best men; he was brought up from his very childhood to make the boat his cradle, and the wave his home. Wet or dry, calm or stormy, blow high, blow low, with a plank beneath his foot, and a few threads of canvass over his head, he was in his element; and long ere he reached the full strength of manhood he was known for the most reckless of all; even amongst those daring spirits who seem to think life by far the least valuable of their earthly possessions. Twice, as a boy, had he *volunteered* to make up the crew of a life-boat when the oldest hands were eyeing with doubtful glances that white, seething surf through which they would have to make their way to the angry leaden sea beyond; and the men of Deal themselves, those heroes of the deep, acknowledged, with the abrupt freemasonry of the brave, that 'the lad was as tough as pin-wire, *heart* to the back-bone.' His carelessness of weather soon became proverbial, and his friends often expostulated with him on his rashness in remaining out at sea with a craft by no means qualified to encounter the sudden squalls of the Channel, or the heavy seas which come surging up from the Atlantic in a real Sou'-Wester. His uncle at length promised to assist him in building a lugger of somewhat heavier tonnage than the yawl he was accustomed to risk, and the *Spanking Sally*, of ill-fated memory, was the result. On the first occa-

sion that the young skipper exultingly stamped his foot on a deck he could really call his own, he earned the nickname by which he was afterwards distinguished. His uncle expressed a hope that the owner would now be a trifle more careful in his ventures, and suggested that when it blew hard, and there was a heavy cargo on board, it was good seamanship to run for the nearest port. 'Blow,' repeated the gallant lad, while he passed his fingers through thick glossy curls that the breeze was even then lifting from his forehead—'Blow, uncle; you'll never catch me putting *my* helm down for weather, till it comes on stiff enough to blow every one of these hairs clean out of my figurehead!' From that hour and ever afterwards he was known by the *soubriquet* of Hairblower, and as such we verily believe he had almost forgotten his own original name.

Hardingstone was soon sufficiently recovered to walk back to his hotel, and with his strong frame and constitution scouted the idea of any ill effects arising from what he called 'a mere ducking.' Once, however, on their way home, he pressed Charlie's hand, and with a tear in his eye, strange emotion for him to betray,—whispered, 'Charlie, you've the pluck of the devil—you've saved my life, and I shall never forget it.' We are an undemonstrative people: on the stage or in a book here would have been an opportunity for a perfect oration about gratitude, generosity, and eternal friendship; but not so in

real life; we cannot spare more than a sentence to acknowledge our rescue from ruin or destruction, and we are so afraid of being thought 'humbugs,' that we make even that sentence as cold as possible.

Mrs. Kettering, though, was a lady of a different disposition. She was in a terrible taking when her nephew returned, and she observed the feverish remains of past excitement, which the boy was unable to conceal. Bit by bit she drew from him the whole history of his gallant efforts to save Hardingstone, and the narrow escape they both had of drowning; and as Charlie finished his recital, and Blanche's eyes sparkled through her tears in admiration of his heroism, Mrs. Kettering rang the bell twice for Gingham, and went off into strong hysterics.

'Dear me, Miss, how providential,' said the Abigail, an hour or so afterwards, popping her head into the drawing-room, where Blanche and Charlie were awaiting news of their aunt, having left her to 'keep quiet'—'Doctor Globus is down here for a holiday, and missis bid me send for him if she wasn't any better, and now she *isn't* any better. What shall I do?'

'Send for him, I should think,' said Charlie, and forthwith despatched a messenger in quest of the doctor, whilst Blanche ran up-stairs to mamma's room with a beating heart and an aching presenti-

ment, such as often foretells too truly the worst we have to apprehend.

The curtains were drawn round Mrs. Kettering's bed, and Blanche, hoping it might only be one of the nervous attacks to which her mother was subject, put them gently aside to see if she was sleeping. Even that young, inexperienced girl was alarmed at the dark flush on the patient's face, and the heavy snorting respirations she seemed to draw with such difficulty.

'Oh, mamma, mamma!' said she, laying her head on the pillow by her mother's side, 'what is it? I beseech you to tell me! Dear mamma what can we do to help you!'

Mrs. Kettering turned her eyes upon her daughter, but the pupils were distorted as though from some pressure on the brain, and she strove to articulate in vain. Blanche, in an agony of fear, rushed to the bell-rope, and brought Gingham and Charlie running up hardly less alarmed than herself. What could the lad do in a case like this? With the impetuosity of his character, he took his hat and hastened to Dr. Globus's house with such speed as to overtake the messenger he had previously despatched; Gingham was sent down to hunt up a prescription of that skilful physician, which had once before been beneficial; and Blanche sat her down in her mother's room, to watch, and tremble, and pray for the beloved form, stretched senseless within those white curtains,

She could scarce believe it. In that very room, not six hours ago, she had pinned her mother's shawl, and smoothed her own ringlets. Yet it seemed as if this had occurred to some one else—not to herself. With the unaccountable propensity great excitement ever has for trifling, she arranged the disordered toilet-table; she even counted the curl-papers that lay in their little triangular box; then she went down on her knees, and prayed—as those pray who feel it is the last resource. When she rose, a passion of weeping somewhat relieved her feelings, but with composure came the consciousness of the awful possibility—the separation that might be—to-night, even; and the dim, blank future, desolate, without a mother. But the familiar noises in the street brought her back to the present, and it seemed impossible that this should be the same world in which till now she had scarcely known anxiety or affliction. Then a soothing hope stole over her that these dreadful misgivings might be groundless; that the doctor would come, and mamma would soon be better; and she would nurse her, and love more and more, and never be wilful again: but in the midst, with a pang that almost stopped her heart, flashed across her the recollection of her father's death—the suspense, the confusion, the sickening certainty, the dreary funeral, and how in her little black frock she had clasped mamma's neck, and thought she had saved all, since she had not lost

her. And now, must this come again? And would there be no mother to clasp, when it was over? Blanche groaned aloud. But hark! the door-bell rings, there is a steady footstep on the stairs, and she feels a deep sensation of relief, as though the doctor held the scales of life and death in his hands.

Gingham, in the meantime, whose composure was not proof against anything in the shape of serious illness or danger, had been wandering over the house with her mistress's keys in her hand, seeking for that prescription which she had herself put by, not three days before, but of which she had totally forgotten the hiding-place. Music, work-boxes, blotting-books, were turned over and tumbled about in vain, till at length she bethought her of her mistress's writing-desk, and on opening that 'sanctum,' out fell a paper in her lady's hand, which ignorant Gingham herself at once perceived was meant for no such eyes as hers. She caught a glimpse, too, of her own name between its folds, and even in the hurry and urgency of the moment we are not prepared to say that female curiosity could have resisted the temptation of 'just one peep,' but at that instant 'Cousin Charlie' and the doctor were heard at the door, and as Gingham thrust the mysterious document into her bosom, the former entered the room, and rated her soundly for prying about amongst Aunt Kettering's papers, when she ought to have been up-stairs attending to herself.

Dr. Globus felt Mrs. Kettering's pulse, and turned to Blanche, (who was watching his countenance as the culprit does that of the juryman who declares his fate,) with a face from which it was impossible to gather hope or fear.

'Your mamma must be kept *very* quiet, Miss Blanche,' said the doctor, with whom his young friend was a prime favourite. 'I must turn you all out but Mrs. Gingham. I should like to remain here for a while to watch the effect of some medicine I shall give her; but we cannot have too few people in the room.' And to enhance this significant hint, he pointed to the door at which Charlie was lingering with a white, anxious face.

'But tell me, *dear* doctor,' implored Blanche, in an agony of suspense, '*pray* tell me, is there any danger? will *nothing* do her any good?'

Poor girl, did you ever know a doctor that would reply to such a question?

'We must keep her quiet, my dear,' was all the answer she got; and Blanche was forced to go down stairs, much against her will, and wait in blank dismay with her hand clasping cousin Charlie's; and her eyes turned to the clock, on which the minutes seemed to lengthen into hours, whilst ever and anon a footstep overhead seemed to indicate there would be some news of the patient; yet no door opened, no step was heard upon the stairs. Not a word did the cousins exchange, though the boy moved at in-

tervals restlessly in his chair. The calm, beautiful evening deepened into the purple haze of night over the Channel, the lamps began to twinkle in the street, and still the cousins sat and waited, and still nobody came.

When the door was shut and Globus was left alone with his patient, a solemn, sagacious expression stole over the worthy doctor's face. He had long been the personal friend of Mrs. Kettering, as well as 'her own medical man;' and although he would probably have felt it more had he not been called in professionally, yet it was with a heavy heart and a desponding brow that he confessed to himself there was little or no hope. He had put in practice all that skill and experience suggested—he had sent for a brother physician of high local repute, and now there was nothing more to be done save to wait for the result; so the kind-hearted man sate himself down in the chair Blanche had so lately occupied, and pondered over the many changing years, now like a dream, during which he had known that life which in yonder bed was dribbling out its few remaining sands. He remembered her the merry, black-eyed girl (once he thought her eyes brighter than those of Mrs. Globus) he saw her again the sparkling bride, the good-humoured matron, the doting mother, the not inconsolable widow. It was only yesterday he bowed to her on the parade, and thought how young she looked with her grown-up daughter;

he was to have dined with them to-morrow; and the uncertainty of life looked him startlingly in the face. But the pride of science soon came to the rescue, and the practised healer forgot his private feelings in his professional reflections. And thus Dr. Globus passed his holiday—one afternoon of the precious fourteen, in which he had promised himself the fresh breezes and the out-of-doors liberty of St. Swithin's. Mrs. Globus and the children were picking up shells on the beach, his brother, whom he had not seen for ten years, was coming to dinner; but the doctor's time is the property of the suffering and the doomed, and still Globus sat and watched and calculated, and saw clearly that Mrs. Kettering must die.

The hours stole on, candles were brought into the drawing-room, and the cousins tried in vain with parched lips and choking throats to have some tea. A ring at the door-bell heralded the arrival of the other doctor, a stout man in a brown great coat, smelling of the night-dew. Blanche ran out to meet him—it was a relief to do something—and beckoned him silently up-stairs. She even stole into the sick-room, and caught a glimpse of her mother's figure, recumbent and covered up, but the curtains were half closed, and she could not see the dear face. Globus kindly drew her away, and shut her out, but not before the frightened girl had glanced at a dark-stained handkerchief on the floor, and sickened with the conviction that it was clotted

with blood. Outside, the little housemaid was sitting on the stairs, crying as if her heart would break. Poor Blanche sat down by her in the darkness, and mingled her tears with those of the affectionate servant. She began to get hopeless now. After a while she went down again to cousin Charlie, and was surpised to find it so late; the clock pointed to five minutes past ten; and with trembling hands she closed the windows, listening for an instant to the dash of the waves outside, with a strange wild feeling that they never sounded so before. Then she covered up 'Bully,' who had been whistling ever since the lights were brought, but she had not the heart to exchange a syllable with cousin Charlie; and that poor lad, affecting a composure that his face belied, was pretending to spell over the evening paper, of which he was vacantly staring at the advertisement sheet. Again, there is a movement above, and the two doctors adjourn to another room to discuss the patient's case. Great is the deference paid by the local Esculapius to the famous London physician. What Dr. Globus recommended—what Dr. Globus said—what Dr. Globus thought—were quoted by the former ever afterwards; yet could one have witnessed the consultation of these two scientific men, it might have been instructive to observe how professional etiquette never once gave way to the urgency of the moment—how the science of curing, like that of killing, has its forms, its

subordination, its ranks, its dignities, and its 'customs of war in like cases.' Gingham was left with the patient, and the weeping housemaid stood ready to assist, the latter shewing an abundance of nerve and decision, when called upon to act, which her behaviour on the staircase would scarcely have promised. Even Gingham was less flustered than usual, now there was really something to be frightened at. Woman is never seen to such advantage as when tending the sick; the eye that quails to see a finger pricked, the hand that trembles if there is but a mouse in the room, will gaze unflinchingly on the lancet or the cupping-glass, will apply the leeches without a shudder, or pour the soothing medicament, drop by drop, into the measured wine-glass, with the steadiness and accuracy of a chemical professor. Where man with all his boasted nerve turns sick and pale, and shows himself worse than useless, woman vindicates the courage of her sex, that unselfish heroism, that passive devotion, which is ever ready to bear and be still. They seem to have a positive pleasure in alleviating the pangs of the sufferer, and taking care of the helpless. Look at a bustling matron, blessed with a large family of children, and whatever may be the opinion of the 'Paterfamilias,' however much he may grunt and grumble (so like a *man!*) at having the quiver as full as it will hold, she, in her heart of hearts, welcomes every fresh arrival with the hospitable sentiment of 'the

more the merrier;' and much as she loves them all, lavishes her warmest affections on the last little uninteresting morsel of underdone humanity, which, on its first appearance, is the most helpless, as it is the least attractive of Nature's germinating efforts; unless, indeed, she should own a dwarf, a cripple, or an idiot amongst her thriving progeny, then will that poor creature be the mother's chiefest treasure, then will woman's love and woman's tenderness hover with beautiful instinct round the head which nature itself seems to have scouted, and the mother will press to her heart of hearts the wretched being that all else are prone to ridicule and despise. So in the sick room, when 'pain and anguish wring the brow,' woman wipes the foaming lip and props the sinking head. Woman's care speeds the long doubtful recovery, and woman's prayers soothe the dying hour, when Hope has spread her wings and fled away. In works like these she vindicates her angel-nature, in scenes like these she perfects that humble piety of which it appears to us she has a greater share than the stronger sex. The proud Moslem boasts there will be no women in his material paradise; let us look to ourselves, that the exclusion for us be not all the other way.

Blanche sits vacantly in the drawing-room, and thinks the doctors' consultation is to be endless, and that it is cruel to keep her so long from her Mamma. Charlie puts down the paper, and drawing kindly

towards his cousin, finds courage to whisper some few words of consolation, which neither of them feel to be of the slightest avail. He has been thinking that uncle Baldwin ought to be sent for, but he dares not excite more alarm in his companion's mind by such a suggestion, and he meditates a note to his friend Hardingstone to manage it for him. Uncle Baldwin, better known in the world as Major-General Bounce, is Mrs. Kettering's brother, and lives in the midland counties—'he should be sent for immediately,' thinks Charlie, 'if he is to see my aunt alive.' Blanche is getting very restless, and thinks she might soon go up stairs and see——Hush! the bed-room door opens—a rapid footstep is heard on the stairs—it is Gingham running down for the doctors—Blanche rushes to the door and intercepts her on the landing-place—the woman's face is ashy pale and her eyes stand strangely out in the dubious light—her voice comes thick and husky. The young girl is quite composed for the instant, and every syllable thrusts straight to her heart, as the maid stammers out, 'Oh, Miss Blanche! Miss Blanche! your Mamma——'

* * * *

The sun rose, and the waters of the Channel glittered in the morning-light, but the shutters were closed at No. 9—and honest Hairblower drew his rough hand across his eyes, as he sought to get some news of 'poor Miss Blanche.' He met Hardingstone coming from the house, whither the 'man of action'

had repaired on the first intelligence of their calamity, and had made himself as useful as he could to the afflicted family. 'Do she take on, poor dear?' said Hairblower, scarcely restraining the drops that coursed down his weather-beaten cheeks. 'Such a young thing as that, Mr. Hardingstone, to go loose without a mother—and the poor lady, too, gone down like in a calm. They'll not be leaving, sir, just yet, will 'em? I couldn't bear to think of Miss Blanche cruizing about among strangers, till she begins to hold up a bit—she should come out and get the sea-air as soon as she is able for it, and I'll have the boat covered in and ready day and night—oh, Mr. Hardingstone, what *can* I do, sir, for the poor young lady in her distress?' Frank shook the honest fellow's hand, and could scarcely command his own feelings enough to reply. He had done everything that was necessary in the house of death, had sent off an express for the General, sealed up Mrs. Kettering's jewel-boxes, writing-cases, etc., and performed all those offices of which the two children, for so we might almost call them, were incapable, and which, even in the presence of the Destroyer are still hard, cold matters of business, and *must* be attended to, like the ordering dinner, and the arrangement for the funeral, though the survivors' hearts may ache, and their wounds burst out afresh, till they too wish their bodies were laid at rest beneath the sod, and their spirits were away, free and unmourning, with the

loved one in those realms with which, sooner or later, we are all to be acquainted.

On the child's misery it would not become us to dwell. There are feelings over which a veil is drawn too sacred to be disturbed by mortal hand. Well might Margaret Douglas exclaim, in the old ballad—

> 'True lovers I may have many a one,
> But a father once slain, I shall never see mair.'

And when a young, affectionate girl is wailing for a parent, the voice of sorrow cannot be hushed, nor the tears dried till grief has had its course, and time has cured the wounds now so excruciating, which ere long shall be healed over and forgotten. 'Cousin Charlie,' boy-like, was more easily consoled, and although at intervals his kind aunt's voice would seem to sound in his ears, and the sight of her work, her writing, or any other familar object associated with herself, would bring on a fresh accession of grief, yet in the society of Frank Hardingstone, and the anticipation of Uncle Baldwin's arrival, he found objects to divert his thoughts, and direct them to that brilliant inheritance of the young, the golden future, which never *shall* arrive. He was, besides, a lad of a sanguine, imaginative disposition, and these are the spirits over which sorrow has least power. The more elastic the spring, the more easily it regains its position, and a sensitive organisation, after the first recoil, will rise

uninjured from a shock that prostrates more material souls to the very dust.

Over the rest of the household came the reaction that invariably follows the first sensations of awe inspired by sudden death. There was an excitement not altogether unpleasing in the total derangement of plans, the uncertainty as to the future created amongst the domestics by the departure of their mistress. The butler knew he should have to account for his plate, and was busied with his spoons and his inventory. The footman speculated on the next place he should get, with 'a family that spent nine months of the year in London;' the very 'boy in buttons' thought more of his promotion than of the kind mistress who had housed, clothed, and fed him when a parish orphan. Gingham herself, that tender damsel, was occupied and excited about Miss Blanche's mourning, and her own 'breadths' of black and 'depths' of crape usurped the place of unavailing regrets in a mind not calculated to contain many ideas at a time. Besides the pleasure of 'shopping,' inexplicable as it may appear to man's perverted taste, is one which ravishes the female mind with an intense delight; and what with tradesmen's condolences, the interminable fund of gossip created thereby, the comparing of patterns, the injunctions on all sides 'not to give way,' and the visits to linen drapers' shops, we cannot but confess that Gingham's spirits were surprisingly buoyant,

considering the circumstance under which she swept those costly wares from their tempting counters. Tom Blacke, too, lost no time in assuring her of his sympathy.

'O Miss Gingham,' said wily Tom, as he insisted on carrying a huge brown-paper parcel home for her, and led the way by a circuitous route along the beach, 'O Miss Gingham, what a shock for your affectionate natur' and kindly 'eart! Yet sorrow becomes some people,' added Tom, reflectively, and glancing his dark eyes into Gingham's muddy-looking face, as he offered her an arm.

'Go along with you, Mr. Blacke,' replied the sorrowing damsel, forgetful of her despondency for the moment, which emboldened him to proceed.

'You ought to have a home, Miss Gingham—you ought to have some one to attach yourself to—you that attaches everybody' (he ventured a squeeze, and the maiden did not withdraw the brown-thread glove which rested on his arm; so Tom mixed it a little stronger)—'a 'onest man to depend on, and a family and such like.'

Tom flourished his arm along a line of imaginary olive branches, and Gingham represented that 'she couldn't think of such a thing.'

'Service isn't for the likes of you, miss,' proceeded the tempter; 'hindependence is fittest for beauty' (Tom peeped under the bonnet, and 'found it,' as he expressed himself, 'all serene;') 'a cottage and cou-

tent, and 'a 'eart that is 'umble may 'ope for it 'ere;'' with which concluding words Mr. Blacke, who was an admirer of poetry, and believed with Moore *that* would be given to song 'which gold could never buy,' imprinted a vigorous kiss on those not very tempting lips, and felt that the day was his own.

Ladies of mature charms, are less easily taken aback by such advances than their inexperienced juniors. The position, even if new in practice, is by no means so in theory, and having often anticipated the attack, they are the more prepared to receive it when it arrives. Ere our lovers reached No. 9, he had called her by her Christian name, and 'Rachel' had promised 'to think of it.' As she closed the 'area-gate,' Gingham had given her heart away to a scamp. True she was oldish, uglyish, wore brown-thread gloves, and had a yellow skin, yet for all this she had a woman's heart, and like a very woman, gave it away to Tom Blacke without a return.

In good time General Bounce arrived, and took the command from Frank Hardingstone, with many gracious acknowledgments of his kindness. The General was a man of far too great importance to be introduced at the conclusion of a chapter. It is sufficient to say, that with military promptitude and decision (which generally means a disagreeable and abrupt method of doing a simple thing) he set the household in order, arranged the sad ceremony, over which he presided with proper gravity, packed cousin

Charlie off to his private tutor's, paid the servants their wages, and settled the departure of himself and niece for his own residence.

Do we think ourselves of account in this our world? —do we think we shall be so missed and so regretted? Drop a stone into a pond, there is a momentary splash, a bubble on the surface, and circle after circle spreads, and widens and weakens, till all is still and smooth as though the water had never been disturbed; so is it with death. There is a funeral, and crape, and weeping, and 'callings to inquire,' then the intelligence gets abroad amongst mere acquaintances, and utter strangers, a line in the *Times* proclaims our decease to the world. Ere it has reached the colonies, we are well nigh forgotten at home.

Mrs. Kettering was at rest in her grave, the General was full of his arrangements and his responsibilities, Charlie was back amongst his mathematics and his cricket, and his Greek and Latin. The servants were looking out for fresh places, and the life that had disappeared from the surface was forgotten by all. By all save one; for still Blanche was gazing on the waters and mourning for her mother.

CHAPTER V.

Uncle Baldwin.

NEWTON-HOLLOWS AND ITS GROUNDS—BACHELORS' BILLETS—THE HEIRESS AND HER COMPANION—GENERAL BOUNCE—A GENTLEMAN FARMER—THE LADIES' CLUB—A WOMAN'S IDEAL.

IN an unpretending corner of the *Guyville Guide and Midland Counties' Directory,* a few lines are devoted to inform the tourist that 'Newton-Hollows, post-town, Guyville, in the Hundred of Cow-capers, is the seat of Major-general Bounce, etc., etc., etc. The lover of the picturesque obtains, from the neighbourhood of this mansion, a magnificent view, comprising no less than seventeen churches, a vast expanse of wood and meadow-land, the distant spires of Bubbleton, and the imposing outline of the famous Castle Guy.' Doubtless all these beauties might have been conspicuous, had the adventurous tourist chosen to climb one of the lofty elms with which the house was surrounded; but from the altitude of his own stature, he was obliged to content himself with a far less extensive landscape, seeing that the country was closely wooded and as flat as his hand. But Newton-Hollows was one of those sweet little places, self-contained and compact, that require no distant

views, no shaggy scenery, no 'rough heath and rugged wood,' to enhance their charm. Magnificent old timber, 'the oak and the ash, and the bonny ivy-tree,' to say nothing of elms and chesnuts, dotted the meadows and pastures, in which the mansion was snugly ensconced. People driving up, or, rather, along the level approach, were at a loss to make out where the farms ended and the park began. Well-kept lawns, that looked as if they were fresh mown every morning, swept up to the drawing-room windows, opening to the ground; not a leaf was strewn on sward or gravel; not a weed, nor even a daisy, permitted to show its modest head above the surface; and as for a rake, roller, or a gardener's hat being left in a place where such instruments have no business, why the General would have made the unfortunate delinquent eat it, rake, roller, or 'wide-awake,' and discharged him besides on the spot. No wonder the flower-garden, adjoining the conservatory, which again opened into the drawing-room, looked so trim and well-kept: 'Master's' hobby was a garden, and, though utterly ignorant of the names, natures, and treatment of plants, he liked to see every variety in his possession, and spared no expense on their cultivation; so a head gardener and five subalterns carried off all the prizes at the Bubbleton and Guyville horticulturals; and the General complained that he could never get a nosegay for his table, nor a bit of fruit for his dessert, fit to eat.

Yet were there worse 'billets' in this working world than Newton-hollows. The Bubbleton 'swells' and county dignitaries found it often 'suit their hunting arrangements,' to go, over-night, and dine with 'old Bounce.' He would always 'put up a hack for you,' than which no effort of hospitality makes a man more deservedly popular, in a hunting-country; and his dinners, his Indian dishes, his hot pickles, his dry champagne, his wonderful claret ('not a head-ache in a hogshead, sir,' the General would say, with a frown of defiance), were all in keeping with the snug, comfortable appearance of his dwelling, and the luxurious style which men who have served long in the army, and often been obliged to 'rough it,' know so well how to enjoy. Then there was no pretension about the thing whatever. The house, though it ranged over a considerable extent of ground, particularly towards the offices, was only two stories high: 'a mere cottage,' its owner called it; but a cottage in which the apartments were all roomy and well-proportioned, in which enough 'married couples could be put up,' to furnish a very good-sized dinner-table, and the bachelors (we like to put in a word for our fellow-sufferers) were as comfortably accommodated as their more fortunate associates, who travelled with wives, imperials, cap-boxes, and ladies'-maids.

It is a bad plan to accustom unmarried gentlemen to think they can do without their comforts: it

makes them hardy and independent, and altogether averse to the coddling, and care, and confinement with which they expect to find matrimony abound. As we go through the world, in our desolate celibacy, we see the net spread in sight of many a bird, and we generally remark, that the meshes which most surely entangle the game, are those of self-indulgence and self-applause. You *must* gild the wires and pop a lump of sugar between them too, if you would have the captive flutter willingly into the cage. When young Cœlebs comes home from hunting or shooting, and has to divest himself of his clammy leathers or dirt-encumbered gaiters, in a room without a fire and with a cracked pane in the window, he takes no pleasure in his adornment, but hurries over his toilet, or perhaps begins to smoke. This should be avoided: we have known a quiet cigar do away with the whole effect of a bran-new pink bonnet. But if, on the contrary, he finds a warm luxurious room, plenty of hot water, wax-candles on the dressing-table, and a becoming looking-glass, the quarry lingers over the tie of its neckcloth, with a pleasing conviction that that is not half a bad-looking fellow grinning opposite, and moreover that there is a 'deuced *loveable* girl' down-stairs, who seems to be of the same opinion. So the thing works: vows are exchanged, *trousseaux* got ready, settlements drawn out, the lawyers thrive, and fools are multiplied. Had Newton-Hollows belonged to a designing ma-

tron, instead of an unmarried general officer, it might have become a perfect mart for the exchanges of beauty and valour. Hunting men are pretty usually a marrying race, whether it be from daily habits of recklessness, a bold disregard of the adage which advises 'to look before you leap,' or a general thick-headedness and want of circumspection, the red-coated Nimrod falls an easy prey to any fair enslaver, who may think him worth the trouble of subjection; and for one alliance that has been negotiated in the stifling atmosphere of a London ball-room, twenty owe their existence to the fresh breezes, the hap-hazard events and surrounding excitement of the hunting field.

General Bounce's guests, as was natural in the country where he resided, were mostly men like mad Tom,

'Whose chiefest care
Was horse to ride and weapon wear;'

nor, like him, would they have objected to place gloves in their caps or carry any other favours, which might demonstrate their own powers of fascination, and their rank in the good graces of the heiress. Yes, there was an heiress now at Newton-Hollows. Popular as had always been the General's hospitality, he was now besieged with hints, and advances, and inuendoes, having for their object an invitation to his house. What a choice of scamps might he have had, all ready and willing to marry

101128

his niece, all anxious, if possible, to obtain even a peep 'of that little Miss Kettering, not yet out of the school-room, who is to have ever so many hundred thousand pounds, and over whom old Bounce keeps watch and ward, like a fiery dragon.'

But the passing years have little altered Blanche's sweet and simple character, though they have rounded her figure and added to her beauty. She is to 'come out' next spring, and already the world is talking of her charms and her expectations. A pretty picture is so much prettier in a gilt frame, and she will probably begin life with the ball at her foot, yet is there the same soft artless expression in her countenance, that it wore at St. Swithin's ere her mother's death, the same *essence* of beauty, independent of colouring and features, which may be traced in really charming people from the cradle to the grave, which made Blanche a winning child, is now enhancing the loveliness of her womanhood, and will probably leave her a very pleasant-looking old lady.

'And Charlie comes home to-morrow,' says Blanche, tripping along the gravel walk that winds through those well-kept shrubberies. 'I wonder if he 's at all the sort of person you fancy, and whether you will think him as perfect as I do?'

'Probably not, my dear,' replied her companion, whose stately gait contrasted amusingly with Blanche's light and playful gestures. 'People seldom come up to one's ideas of them; and I am sure it is not

your fault if I do not expect to meet a perfect hero of romance in your cousin.' We ought to know those low thrilling tones,—we ought to recognise the majestic figure—the dark sweeping dress—the braided hair and classical features of that pale, serious face. Mary Delaval is still the handsome governess; and Blanche would rather part with her beauty, or her bull-finch, or any of her most-prized earthly possessions, than that dear duenna, who, having finished her education, is now residing with her in the dubious capacity of part chaperon, part teacher, and part friend.

'Well, dear, he *is* a hero,' replied Blanche, who always warmed on *that* subject. 'Let me see which of my heroes he's most like; Prince Rupert—only he's younger and better looking' (Blanche, though a staunch little cavalier, could not help associating mature age and gravity with the flowing wigs in which most of her favourites of that period were depicted); 'Claverhouse, only not so cruel,—he *is* like Claverhouse in the face, I think, Mrs. Delaval, or 'bonnie Prince Charlie,' or Ivanhoe,—yes, Ivanhoe,—that's the one; he's as brave and as gentle, and Mr. Hardingstone, whose life he saved you know, says he rides most beautifully, and will make a capital officer.'

'And which of the heroes is Mr. Hardingstone, Blanche?' said her friend in her usual measured tones. Blanche blushed.

'Oh, I can't understand Mr. Hardingstone,' said she; 'I think he's odd-*ish*, and quite unlike other people; then he looks through one so. Mrs. Delaval, I think it's quite rude to stare at people as if you thought they were not telling the truth. But he's good-looking, too,' added the young lady, reflectively; 'only not to be compared with Charlie.'

'Of course not,' rejoined her friend; 'but it is fortunate that we are to enjoy the society of this paladin till he joins his regiment—Lancers are they not? Well, we must hope, Blanche, to use the language of your favourites of the middle ages, that he may prove a lamb among ladies, as he is doubtless a lion among lancers.'

'Dear Charlie! how he will enjoy his winter. He is so fond of hunting; and he is to have Hyacinth, and Hap-Hazard, and May-Fly to ride for his own —so kind of Uncle Baldwin; but I must be off to put some flowers in his room,' quoth Blanche, skipping along the walk as young ladies will when unobserved by masculine eyes; 'he may arrive at any moment, he's such an uncertain boy.'

'Zounds! you've broke it, you fiddle-headed brute!' exclaimed a choleric voice from the further side of a thick laurel hedge, startling the ladies most unceremoniously, and preparing them for the spectacle of a sturdy black cob trotting rebelliously down the farm-road, with a fragment of his bridle dangling from his head, the remaining portion being

firmly secured to a gate-post, at which the self-willed animal had been tied up in vain. Another instant brought the owner of the voice and late master of the cob into the presence of Mrs. Delaval and his niece. It was no less a person than General Bounce.

'Uncle Baldwin, Uncle Baldwin,' exclaimed Blanche, who turned him round her finger as she did the rest of the establishment, 'where have you been all day? You promised to drive me out—you know you did, you wicked, hard-hearted man.'

'Been, my dear?' replied the General, in a tone of softness contrasting strangely with the flushed and vehement bearing of his outward man,—'at that (no, I will *not* swear)—at that doubly accursed farm. Would you believe the infernal stupidity of the people—(excuse me, Mrs. Delaval)—men with heads on their shoulders, and hair, and front teeth like other people,—and they 've sent the black bull to Bubbleton without winkers—without winkers, as I live by bread; but I wont be answerable for the consequences—no, I wont make good any damages originating in such carelessness; no, not if there 's law in England or justice under heaven! But, my sweet Blanche,' added the General, in a tone of amiable piano, the more remarkable for the forte of his previous observations, 'I'll go and get ready this instant, my darling; you shan't be disappointed; I'll order the pony-carriage forthwith. Holloa! you, sir; only let me catch you—only let me catch you,

that's all, I'll trounce you as sure as my name's Bounce!' and the General, without waiting for any further explanation, darted off in pursuit of an idle village boy whom he espied in the very act, *flagrante delicto*, of trespassing on a pathway which the lord of the manor had been several years vainly endeavouring to shut up.

General Bounce was such a medley as can only be produced by the action of a tropical sun on a vigorous, sanguine Anglo-Saxon temperament. Specimens are becoming scarcer every day. They are seldom to be met with in our conventional and well-behaved country, though here and there, flitting about a certain Club celebrated for its curries, they may be discovered even in the heart of the metropolis. On board transports, men-of-war, mail-steamers, and such like government conveyances, they are more at home; in former days they were occasionally visible inside our long coaches, where they invariably made a difficulty about the window; but in the colonies they are to be seen in their highest state of cultivation; as a general rule—the hotter the climate the more perfect the specimen.

Our friend the General was a very Phœnix of his kind. In person he was short, stout, square, and active, with black twinkling eyes and a round clean-shaved face, small-featured and good-humoured looking; but choleric withal. His naturally florid complexion had been baked into a deep red-brown by his

Indian campaigns. If Pythagoras was right in his doctrine concerning the transmigration of souls, the General's must have previously inhabited the person of a sturdy, snappish, black and tan terrier. In manner, he was alternately marvellously winning and startlingly abrupt, the transition being instantaneous; whilst in character he was decided, energetic, and impracticable, though both rash and obstinate, with an irritable temper and an affectionate heart. He had seen service in India, and by his own account, had not only experienced sundry hair-breadth 'scapes bordering on the romantic, but likewise witnessed such strange sights and vagaries as fall to the lot of few, save those whose bodily vision is assisted by that imaginative faculty denominated 'the mind's eye.'

The General was a great disciplinarian, and piqued himself much upon the order in which he kept the females of his establishment, Blanche especially, whose lightest word, by the way, was his law. Indeed, like many old bachelors, he entertained a reverence almost superstitious for the opposite sex, and a few tears, shed at the right moment, would always bear the delinquent harmless, whatever the misdemeanour for which she was taken to task. The men, indeed, found him more troublesome to deal with, and the newly arrived were somewhat alarmed at his violent language and impetuous demeanour, but the older servants always 'took the bull by the horns,' fearlessly and at once, nor in the end did

they ever fail to get their own way with a master who, to use their peculiar language, 'was easily upset, though he soon came round again.' What made the General an infinitely less disagreeable man in society than he otherwise would have been, was the fact of his having a farm, which farm served him as a safety-valve to carry off all the irritation that could not but accumulate in an easy uneventful life, destitute of real grievances, as of the stirring active scenes to which he had been accustomed in his earlier days. If a gentleman finds it indispensable to his health that he should be continually in hot water, that he should always have something to grumble at, something to disappoint him, let him take to farming, his own land or another's, it is immaterial which, but let him 'occupy,' as it is called, a certain number of acres, and we will warrant him as much 'worry' and 'annoyance' as the most 'tonic'-craving disposition can desire. Let us accompany our retired warrior to his farm-yard, whither, after an ineffectual chase, he at length followed his black pony, forgetful of Blanche and the drive on which, in the now shortening day-light, it was already too late to embark.

In the first place the bull was come back—he had been to Bubbleton *minus* his winkers, but no one in that salubrious town caring to purchase a bull, he had returned to his indigenous pastures and his disgusted owner—therefore must the bailiff hazard an

excuse and a consolation, in which the words 'poor,' and 'stock,' and the 'fair on the fifteenth,' are but oil to the flame.

'Fair! he'll be as thin as a whipping-post in a week —if anybody bids five shillings for him at the fair, I'll eat him, horns and all! What weight are those sheep?' adds the General, abruptly turning to another subject, and somewhat confusing his deliberate overseer by the suddenness of the inquiry. 'Now those turnips are not fit for sheep! I tell you they ought to be three times the size. Zounds, man, *will* you grow larger turnips? And have I not countermanded those infernal iron hurdles, a hundred times! a thousand times!! a hundred thousand times!!! Give *me* the pail, you lop-eared buffoon— do you call *that* the way to feed a pig?'—and the General, seizing the bucket from an astonished chaw-bacon, who stood aghast, as if he thought his master was mad, managed to spill the greater part of the contents over his own person and gaiters, rendering a return home absolutely indispensable. He stumped off accordingly, giving a parting direction to some of his myrmidons to catch the black cob, in as mild a tone and with as good-humoured a countenance as if he had been in this heavenly frame of mind the whole afternoon.

Now the General, when he first began to live alone, and to miss the constant interchange of ideas which a military life encourages, had acquired a habit

of discoursing to himself on such subjects as were most interesting to him at the time; so as he toddled merrily along, much relieved by the bucolic blow-up, and admired his sturdy legs and swung his short arms all the way up the long gravel-walk towards the house, his thoughts framed themselves into a string of disjointed sentences, now muttered scarcely above a whisper, now spoken boldly out in an audible tone, which would have led a stranger to suppose he was carrying on a conversation with some one on the other side of the screening Portugal laurels. 'Thick-headed fellows these bumpkins,' soliloquized the General, 'not like my old friends at Fool-a-pore—could make them skip about to some purpose: there's nothing like a big stick for a nigger—never mind. I'm young enough to begin again—man of iron—what an arm! what a leg! might have married a dozen peeresses, and beauties by hundreds—didn't though. Now there's Blanche, I shall have fifty fellows all after her before Christmas—sharp dogs if they think they can weather old Bounce, Rummagee Bang couldn't. By the bye, I haven't told Mrs. Delaval that story yet—clever woman, and good judgment—admires my character I'll bet a million—an officer's daughter, too, and what a magnificent figure she has—Bounce, you're an old fool! As for Charlie, he shall stay here all the winter; there's mettle in that lad, and if I can't lick him into shape I'm a Dutchman. He'll show 'em the way with

the hounds, and I'll put him up to a thing or two the young scamp. Snaffles! Snaffles!!' roared the General, as he concluded his monologue, and passed the stables on his way to the house, 'don't take any of the horses out to-morrow till you get your orders. Do you *hear* me? man alive!' And by this time having reached home, he stumped off to dress for dinner, keeping up a running fire along the passages, as he discovered here a hearth-broom, and there a coal-scuttle, ready for him to break his shins over, and observed the usual plate and tea-cup standing sentry at each of the ladies' doors.

We may be sure that not the least comfortable of the rooms at Newton-Hollows was especially appropriated as Blanche's own, and that young lady was now sitting opposite a glass that reflected a smiling face, enduring with patience and resignation the ceremony of having 'her hair done.' A French maid, named 'Rosine,' a very pretty substitute for bilious-looking Gingham, was working away at the ivory-handled brushes, and occasionally letting fall a thick glossy ringlet athwart the snow-white cape in which the process of adornment was submitted to, whilst Mary Delaval, buried in an arm-chair drawn close to the blazing fire, and enveloped in a dressing gown, with an open book in her hand, was quietly listening to Blanche's remarks on things in general, and her own self and prospects in particular.

That hour before dinner is the period chosen by

women for their most confidential intercourse, and the enjoyment of what they call a 'cozy chat'—when Damon, in the small hours, smokes a cigar with Pythias, more especially if such an indulgence be treason against the rules of the house, he opens his heart to his fellow-trespasser in a manner of which, next morning, he has but a faint recollection. He confides to him his differences with 'the Governor' —his financial embarrassments, the unsoundness of his horses and his heart, the latter possession much damaged by certain blue eyes in the neighbourhood; he details to him the general scandal with which he is conversant, and binding him by promises of eternal secresy, proceeds deliberately to demolish the fair fame of maid and matron who enjoy the advantage of his acquaintance; finally he throws his cigar-end beneath the grate and betakes him 'to perch,' as he calls it, with an infatuated persuasion that the confidences which he has broken will be respected by his listener, and that his debts, his difficulties, his peccadilloes, and the lameness of his bay mare, will not form the subject of conversation to-morrow night, when he, Damon, has gone back to London, and Pythias takes out his case to smoke a cigar with Dionysius. But the ladies by this time are fast asleep, dreaming, bless them, as it shall please Queen Mab,—they must not wither their roses by sitting up too late, and though tolerant of smoking sometimes, they do not practice that abomination them-

selves, so tea-time is *their* hour of gossip, and heartily they enjoy the refreshment, both of mind and body, ere they come down demure and charming, in low evening dresses, with little or no appetite for dinner.

'Never mind Rosine,' said Blanche, as that attendant concluded an elaborate plait by the insertion of an enormous hair-pin, 'she can't speak a word of English. I agree with you that it is very charming to be an heiress, and I shall enjoy 'coming out,' and doing what I like; but I wish, too, sometimes, that I were a man; I feel so restrained, so useless, so incapable of doing any good. Mrs. Delaval, I think women are shamefully kept back: why should'nt we have professions and employments? not that I should like to be a soldier or a sailor, because I am not brave, but I do feel as if I was fit for something greater than tying up flowers or puzzling through worsted-work.'

'There was a time when I, too, thought the same,' replied Mary, 'but depend upon it, my dear, that you may do an infinity of good in the station which is assigned you. I used to fancy it would be so noble to be a man, and to do something grand, and heroic, and disinterested; but look at half the men we see, Blanche, and tell me if you would like to change places with one of them. Caring only for their dress, their horses, and their dinners, they will tell you themselves, and think they are philosophers for saying so, 'that they are easy good-tempered

fellows, and if they can only get enough to eat, and lots of good hunting and good claret, they are perfectly satisfied.' Indeed, my dear, I think we have the best of it; we are more resigned, more patient, more contented, we have more to bear and we bear it better, more to detach us from this world and to wean us from being entirely devoted to ourselves. No, I had rather be a woman with all her imperfections, than one of those lords of the creation, such as we generally find them.'

'But still there are great men, Mrs. Delaval, even in these days. Do you think they are all selfish and egotistical, and care only for indulgences?'

'Heaven forbid, my dear; I only argue from the generality. My idea of man,' said Mary, kindling as she went on in her description, 'is that he should be brave, generous, and unselfish; stored with learning, which he uses not for display but for a purpose; careless of vanity and frivolous distinction; reliant on himself and his own high motives; deep and penetrating in his mental powers, with a lofty view of the objects of existence, and the purposes for which we are here. What does it signify whether such a one is good-looking in person or taking in manner; but as I am describing a hero, I will say his frame should be robust and his habits simple, to harmonize with the vigour of his intellect, and the singleness of his character.'

'You have described Mr. Hardingstone exactly,'

exclaimed Blanche with rising colour, and a feeling not quite of pleasure at her heart. Yet what signified it to her that Mary Delaval's Quixotic idea of a pattern-man should typify so precisely her old friend Frank? Mary had never seen him; and even if she had, what was that to Blanche? Yet somehow she had taught herself from childhood to consider him her own property, probably because he was such a friend of Charlie; and she was a thorough woman, though she fancied she ought to have been born a hero, and consequently very jealous of her rights, real or imaginary. Silly Blanche! there was a sort of excitement, too, in talking about him, so she went on—'He is all that you have said, and people call him very good-looking besides, though I don't think him so,' and Blanche coloured as she spoke, and told Rosine not to pull her hair so hard.

'Well, my dear,' said Mary, 'then I should like to know him. But never mind the gentlemen, Blanche, there will be half-a-dozen here to dinner to-day. To return to yourself—you have a bright career before you, but never think it is traced out only for your own enjoyment. As a girl you may, in your position, be an example to your equals, and a blessing to your dependents: think what a deal of good you can do even about a place like this; and then, should you marry, your influence may be the means of leading your husband and family into the right way. I have had a good deal of trouble, as

you know, but I have always tried to remember, that to bear it patiently and to do the best I could in my own path without repining, was to fulfil my destiny as nobly as if I had been a dethroned queen, or a world famous heroine. No, my dear, this world is not a place only for dancing, and driving, and flirting, and dressing.—Good gracious! there's the dinner-bell! and my hair not 'done' yet.' And away Mary rushed in the midst of her lecture to complete those arrangements which brought her out some ten minutes afterwards the handsomest woman within fifty miles of Guyville.

Notwithstanding the lofty aspirations of these ladies, their contempt for the approbation of the other sex, and the short time they allowed themselves for adornment, two more tasteful and perfectly-finished toilettes have been seldom accomplished, than those which at the well-lighted dinner-table enhanced the attractions of the pretty heiress, and her handsome governess.

CHAPTER VI.

The Blind Boy.

THE GRUB BECOMES A BUTTERFLY—FAREWELL AND HOW D'YE DO—NOT WHAT WAS EXPECTED—THE GENERAL'S HOBBY—BLANCHE'S BIRTHDAY—FAMILY ARRANGEMENTS—'GIVE YOU JOY'—A COUNTRY DINNER-PARTY—TURNING THE TABLES—'THE COQUETTE.'

MEANWHILE the eventful Friday has arrived, which has promoted 'Cousin Charlie' to the rank of manhood. The *Gazette* of that day has announced the appointment of 'Charles Kettering, Gentleman, to be Cornet, in the 20th Lancers, vice Slack, who retires,' and the young one, who has been cultivating the down on his upper lip, for months, in anticipation of this triumph, turns up those ends, of which there is scarcely enough to take hold, and revels in the consciousness that he is a boy no longer, but an officer, a cavalry officer and a gentleman. Old Nobottle, whom the pupil has attached to himself, as an imaginative boy often does a sober old gentleman, is of the same mind, and has confided to Mr. Hardingstone his opinion of Charlie, and the bright deeds he expects from him. 'The lad has all the makings of a soldier, Sir,' said the clergyman: 'the

cheerful spirits, the gallant bearing, the love of action, and the chivalrous vanity—half courageous, half coxcombical, which form the military character, and, if he has a chance, he will distinguish himself—*if* he has a chance, do I say? he'll make himself a chance, Sir; the boy is cut out for a recruit, and he'll learn his drill, and know his men, and keep his troop-accounts smarter than any of 'em. Nobottle was waxing enthusiastic, as the old recollections stole over him, and he saw, in fancy, a certain young artillery officer, gay amongst the gayest, and brave amongst the bravest, consulted, by his seniors, for his science and professional knowledge, and thanked, in general orders, for 'his distinguished gallantry,' in more than one decisive action. How different from the slouching slovenly old man, in yesterday's white neckcloth, who may now be seen budding his roses, poking about his parish, and stuffing stupid young gentleman with as much learning as shall enable them to pass their dreaded examinations. Poor old Nobottle, you *would* marry for love, you *would* sacrifice your profession and your commission, your prospects and your all, for the red-nosed lady, then, to do her justice, a very pretty girl, who now occupies the top of your table. Like Antony, you were 'all for love and the world well lost,' and, after a time, you found that the exchange was against you: what you took for gold turned out to be dross,—that which was honey in the mouth became bitter as gall

in the digestion; in short, you discovered Mrs. N. was a failure, and that you did not care two pins for each other. Then came poverty and recrimination, and the gnawing remorse of chances thrown away, that could not possibly recur again. Fortunately for you, a classical education and Church interest enabled you to take orders and get a living, so you work on, contentedly enough, now that your sensations are deadened and yourself half torpid; and although, when your better feelings obtain the mastery, you cannot but acknowledge the superiority of the present warfare in which you are engaged, over that in which you spent your gaudy youth, yet, ever and anon, that foolish old heart still pines for the marshalling of men and the tramp of steeds, 'the plumed troop and the big wars, that make ambition virtue.'

Hardingstone breakfasted at the rectory, on the morning of Charlie's departure; he was to drive him to the station, and our young friend must indubitably have been late for the train, had he not been rescued, by a man of decision, from the prolonged farewells of the inconsolables he left behind. Binks, the butler, was overwhelmed by sorrow and strong beer; Tim, the tea-boy, who had never before seen a half-a-sovereign, sobbed aloud; the maids, on whom Charlie's good looks had made an impression, proportional to the softness of each damsel's heart, laughed and wept, by turns · whilst Mrs. Nobottle,

generally a lady of austere and inflexible disposition, weakened the very tea which she was pouring out for breakfast, with her tears, and, finally, embraced Charlie with hysterical affection, and a nose redder than ever. The good rector took him aside, into his study, and blessed him, as a father blesses a son. 'You have never given me a moment's uneasiness, my dear boy, since you came here,' said the old man, with a trembling voice; 'you have been a credit to me as a pupil, and a comfort as a friend, and now, perhaps, I shall never see you again. But you won't forget your old pedagogue, and, if ever you are in difficulties, if ever you are in distress, remember there is a home here, to which you may always apply for advice and assistance. God be with you, my boy, in the temptations of a barrack, as, if it should be your lot, in the perilous excitement of a battle. Do your duty, wherever you are, and think, sometimes, of old Nobottle.'

Why was it Charlie's cigar would *not* light, as he was borne away on the wheels of Frank Hardingstone's dog-cart? The tinder was quite wet, though there was not a drop of rain in the sky, and he turned away his head from his companion, and bent sedulously over the refractory tobacco. Could it be that Charlie was crying? 'Tis not improbable. Despite his recently acquired manhood, he had a soft affectionate heart, and if it now gave way and came, unbidden, to his eyes, Frank liked him all the better for it.

And as he was whirled along on the London and North Western, how the young soldier's thoughts ran riot in the future. Would he have changed places with any dignitary in the world, monarch, prince, or peer, or even with the heretofore much admired Frank Hardingstone? Not he. None of these held a commission in the 20th Lancers, and were to be pitied, if not despised, accordingly. What a lot was his. Two months leave, at least, and at his time of life two months is an age, to be spent in the gaieties of Newton-Hollows, and the attenuation of Hap-hazard, Hyacinth, and May-fly, the mettle of which very excellent steeds Master Charlie had fully resolved to prove. All the delights of Bubbleton and the county gaieties, with the companionship of Blanche, that more than sister, without whom, from his earliest boyhood, no enjoyment could be half enjoyed. And then the flattering pride she would feel, in her officer-cousin, (Charlie felt for his moustaches so perseveringly, that a short-sighted fellow-traveller thought he had a sore lip,) and the request he should be in amongst the young ladies of the neighbourhood, with a romantic conviction that love was not for him, that 'the sword was the soldier's bride,' etc. Then the dreamer looked forward into the vistas of the future, the parade, the bivouac, and the charge, night-watches, in a savage country, for the 20th were even then in Kaffirland, —the trumpet alarum, the pawing troop-horses, the

death-shock and the glittering blade, a certain cornet hurra-ing in the van, the admiration of brother officers, and the veteran colonel's applause, a *Gazette* promotion and honourable mention in despatches,— Uncle Baldwin's uproarious glee at home, and Blanche's quiet smile. Who would not be a boy again? Yet not with the stipulation we hear so often urged, of knowing as much as we do now. That knowledge would destroy it all. No, let us have boyhood once more, with its vigorous credulity and its impossible romance, with that glorious ignorance which turns everything to gold, that sanguine temperament which sheds its rosy hues even over the bleak landscape of future old age. 'Poor lad! how green he is!' says worldly experience, with a sneer of affected pity, at those raptures it would give its very existence to feel again. "Happy fellow; he's a boy still!' says good-natured philosophy, with a smile, half saddened at the thoughts of the coming clouds, which shall too surely darken that sunny horizon. But each has been through the crucible, each recognises that sparkle of the virgin gold, which shall never again appear on the dead surface of the metal, beaten, and stamped, and fabricated into a mere conventional coin. The train whizzes on, the early evening sets in, tired post-horses grope their way up the dark avenue, wheels are heard grinding round the gravel-sweep before the house, and the expected guest arrives at Newton-Hollows.

'Goodness! Charlie, how you *have* been smoking,' exclaims Blanche, after their first affectionate greeting, while she shrinks a little from the cousinly embrace somewhat redolent of tobacco; 'and how you're grown, dear—I suppose you don't like to be told you're grown now—and moustaches, I declare,' she adds, bursting out laughing, as she catches Charlie's budding honours *en profile;* ''pon my word they're a great improvement.' Charlie winced a little. There is always a degree of awkwardness even amongst the nearest and dearest, when people meet after a long absence, and the less artificial the character the more it betrays itself, but Blanche was in great spirits and rattled on, till the General made his appearance, bustling in perfectly radiant with hospitality.

'Glad to see ye, my lad—glad to see ye; have been expecting ye this half hour—trains always late—and always *will* be till they hang a director—I've hanged many a man for less, myself, 'up the country.' Fact, Blanche, I assure you. 'You'll have lots of time to dress,' he observed, glancing at the clock's white face shining in the fire-light,—and adding, with a playful dig of his fingers into Charlie's lean ribs, 'We dine in half an hour, *temps militaire*, you dog! We must teach you that punctuality and a good commissariat are the two first essentials for a soldier.' So the General ran a peal for hand-candles that might have brought a house down.

And Charlie was well acquainted with all the inmates of Newton-Hollows, save Mrs. Delaval. Of her he had often heard Blanche speak as the most delightful of companions and indulgent of governesses, but he had never set eyes on her in person, so as he effected his tie before the glass, and drew his fingers over those precious moustaches to discover if change of air had already influenced their growth, he began to speculate on the character and appearance of the lady who was to complete their family-party. 'A middle-aged woman,'—thought Charlie, for Blanche, on whom some ten years of seniority made a great impression, had always described her as such—'forty, or thereabouts—stout, jolly-looking, and good-humoured, I'll be bound—I know I shall like her—wears a cap I've no doubt, and a front, too, most probably—sits very upright, and talks like a book, till one knows her well—spectacles I shouldn't wonder (it's no use making much of a tie for *her*)—pats Blanche on the shoulder when she gives her precedence, and keeps her hands in black lace mittens, I'll bet a hundred!' With which mental wager, Master Charlie blew his candles out, and swaggered down stairs, feeling in his light evening costume, as indeed he looked, well-made, well-dressed, and extremely like a gentleman.

Mischievous Blanche was enchanted at the obvious start of astonishment with which her introduction was received by her cousin—'Mr. Kettering, Mrs.

Delaval'—Charlie looked positively dismayed. Was this the comfortable, round-about, good-humoured body, he had expected to see?—was that tall stately figure, dressed in the most perfect taste, with an air of more than high-breeding, almost of command, such as duchesses, may be, much admired without possessing—was that the dowdy middle-aged governess?—were those long, deep-set eyes, the orbs that should have glared at him through spectacles, and would black-lace mittens have been an improvement on those white taper hands, beautiful in their perfect symmetry without a single ornament? Charlie bowed low to conceal the blush that overspread his countenance. The boy was completely taken aback, and when he led her in to dinner, and heard those thrilling tones murmuring in his ear, the spell, we may be sure, lost none of its power. 'She is beautiful,' thought Charlie, 'and nearly as tall as I am;' and he was pleased to recollect that Blanche had thought him grown. Ladies, we opine, are not so impressionable as men—at least they do not allow themselves to appear so. Either they are more cautious in their judgments, which we have heard denied by those who plume themselves on knowledge of the sex, or their hypocrisy is more perfect; certainly a young lady's education is based upon principles of the most frigid reserve, and her decorous bearing, we believe, is never laid aside, even in tea-rooms, conservatories, shaded walks, and other such resorts, fatal

to the equanimity of masculine understanding; therefore Mary Delaval did by no means lose her presence of mind on being introduced to the young gentleman, of whose deeds and sentiments she had heard so much. Woman as she was, she could not but be gratified at the evident admiration her appearance created in this new acquaintance, and truth to speak, 'Cousin Charlie' was a youth whose allegiance few female hearts would have entirely scorned to possess, yet was there no occasion to tell the young gentleman as much to his face.

A very good-looking face it was too, with its wide intellectual brow, round which the brown silky hair waved in such becoming clusters—its perfect oval and delicate high-bred features, if they had a fault, too girlish in their soft winning expression—in fact he was as like Blanche as possible; and had his moustaches been shaved, could he indeed have submitted to the sacrifice, his stature lowered, and a bonnet and shawl put on, he might well have passed for his pretty cousin. There was nothing effeminate though about Charlie, save his countenance and his smile. That slender graceful figure was lithe and wiry as the panther's — those symmetrical limbs could toil, those little feet could walk and run, after a Hercules would have been blown and overpowered; and when standing up to his wicket, rousing a horse, or putting him at a fence, there was a game sparkle in his eye, that, to use Frank Hardingstone's ex-

pression, 'meant mischief.' Some of these good-looking young gentlemen are 'ugly customers' enough when their blood is up, and cousin Charlie, like the rest, had quite as much 'devil' in his composition as was good for him. The 'pretty page' only wanted a few years over his head, a little more beard upon his lip, to be a perfect Paladin.

But the spell went on working the whole of dinner-time; in vain the General told his most wondrous anecdotes, scolded his servants at intervals, and pressed his good cheer on the little party—Charlie *could* not get over his astonishment. Mrs. Delaval sat by him, looking like a queen, and talked in her own peculiarly winning voice and impressive manner, just enough to make him wish for more. She was one of those women, who, speaking but little, seem always to mean more than they say, and on whom conscious mental superiority, and the calm, subdued air worn by those who have known affliction, confer a certain mysterious charm, which makes fearful havoc in a young gentleman's heart. There is nothing enslaves a boy so completely as a spice of romance. An elderly Strephon will go on his knees to a romping school-girl, and the more hoydenish and unsophisticated the object, the more will the old reprobate adore her; but beardless youth loves to own superiority where it worships, loves to invest its idol with the fabulous attributes that compose its own ideal; and of all the *liaisons*, honourable and other-

wise, that have bound their votaries in silken fetters, those have been the most fatal, and the most invincible, which have dated their existence from an earnest boyish heart's first devotion to a woman some years his senior, of whom the good-natured world says, 'To be sure she *is* handsome, but, Lor! she's old enough to be his mother!'

Not that Charlie was as far gone as this: on the contrary, his was an imaginative poetical disposition, easily scorched enough, but almost incapable of being thoroughly *done brown*. Of such men, ladies, we would warn you to beware; the very temperament that clothes you in all the winning attributes of its own ideal, can the most easily transfer those fancied attractions to a rival, inasmuch as the charm is not so much yours as his, exists, not in your sweet face, but in his heated and inconstant brain. No, the real prize, depend upon it, is a sensible, phlegmatic, matter-of-fact gentleman, anything but 'wax to receive,' yet if you can succeed in making an impression, most assuredly 'marble to retain.' Such a captive clings to his affections as to his prejudices, and is properly subjected into a tame and willing Benedict, in half the time it takes to guess at the intentions of the faithless rover offering on a dozen shrines an adoration that, however brilliant, is—

'Like light straw on fire,
A fierce but fading flame.'

Again was Charlie struck, as he swaggered off to

open the door for the ladies, by the graceful movements of Mary's majestic figure. Again, the half-bow with which, as she passed out, she acknowledged his courtesy, made a pleasing impression on the boy's fancy; and as he lingered for a moment, ere he shut out the rustle of their dresses and the pleasant tones of the women's voices, and returned to the arm-chair and the claret-decanter, he could not help hoping 'Uncle Baldwin' would be a little less profuse than usual in his hospitality, and a little less prolix in his narrative.

'The young ones drink no wine at all now-a-days,' remarked the General, as Charlie a second time passed the bottle untouched, and his host filled his glass to the brim. 'Fault on the right side, my lad; we used to drink too hard formerly — why, bless you, when I encountered Tortoise, of the Queen's, at the mess of the Kedjeree Irregulars, we sat for seven hours and a half to see one another out, and the two black fellows fainted who were 'told off' to bring in claret and pale ale as they were wanted. Tortoise recovered himself wonderfully about the eighth bottle; and if he had'nt been obliged to be careful on account of a wound in his head, we should have been there now. Drunk! how d'ye mean? Not the least—fact, I assure you.'

Charlie got up and fidgetted about, with his back to the fire, but the General would not let him off so easily.

'Show you the farm to-morrow, my boy, you'll be delighted with my pigs—Neapolitans every hair of 'em. What? no man alive shall presume to tell me they're not the best breed! And I'll tell you what, Charlie, I've secured the handsomest short-horned bull in this country. Two hundred, you dog!—dirt cheap—and if you're fond of stock you'll be charmed with him. Poultry too—real Cochin Chinese—got three prizes at the last show; average height two feet seven inches—rare beauties. Hens and chickens in knee-breeches, and a cock in trunk-hose!' With which conclusion the chuckling old warrior permitted Charlie to wheedle him off into the drawing-room, whither they entered to find the ladies, as usual, absorbed in worsted-work and sunk in solemn silence.

Pleasantly the evenings always passed at Newton-Hollows even with a small party like the present. Music, cards, cockamaroo, and the eternal racing-game, of course, which gives gentle woman an insight into the two fiercest pleasures of the other sex—horse-racing and gambling—and introduces into the drawing-room the slang and confusion of the betting-ring and the hazard-table, served to while away the time. And though the General was even more diffuse than was his wont in personal recollections and autobiography, Blanche scarcely listened, so absorbed was she in her delight at having got cousin Charlie back again, whilst that young gentleman and Mary Delaval were

progressing rapidly in each other's good opinion, and exclaiming, in their respective minds, 'What an agreeable person, and *so different from what I expected.*'

Blanche's birth-day was always kept as a period of great rejoicing at Newton-Hollows, and a very short time after Charlie's arrival that auspicious anniversary was ushered in, as usual, by the General's appearance at the breakfast-table, bearing a cotton-stuffed white and green card-box, highly suggestive of Storr and Mortimer. This was quietly placed by the side of Blanche's plate, and when the young lady made her appearance, and exclaimed, 'Dear, kind Uncle Baldwin, what a love of a bracelet!' though we might have envied, we could not have grudged the General the grateful kiss bestowed on him by his affectionate niece. Uncle Baldwin's mind, however, was intent upon weightier matters than jewels and 'happy returns.' He was to celebrate the festival with a dinner-party; and whilst he had invited several of the élite of Bubbleton to celebrate his niece's birth-day, he was anxious so to dispose and welcome his guests as that none should have reason to consider himself especially favoured or encouraged in the advances which all were too eager to make towards the good graces of the heiress; therefore the General held a solemn conclave, as was his wont, consisting of himself and Mrs. Delaval, who, on such occasions, was requested, with great pomp, to accompany him to

his study, an apartment adorned with every description of weapon used in civilized or savage warfare, and to take her seat in his own huge arm-chair, while he walked up and down the room, and held forth in his usual abrupt and discursive manner.

'I have such confidence in your sound sense, Mrs Delaval,' said he, looking very insinuating, and pausing for an instant in his short, quick strides 'that I always consult you in my difficulties.' This was said piano, but the forte addition immediately succeeded. 'Reserving to myself the option of acting, for dictation I cannot submit to, even from you, my dear Mrs. Delaval. You are aware, I believe, of my intentions regarding Blanche. *Are* you aware of my intentions?' he interrupted himself to demand, in a voice of thunder.

Mary, who was used to his manner, answered calmly, 'that she was not;' and the General proceeded, in a gentle and confidential tone.

'The fact is, my dear madam, I have set my heart on a family arrangement, which I mention to you as a personal friend and a lady for whom I entertain the greatest regard.'

Mary bowed again, and could hardly suppress a smile at the manner in which the old gentleman assured her of his consideration.

'Well, though an unmarried man, *as yet*, I am keenly alive to the advantages of the married state. I never told you, I think, Mrs. Delaval, of an adven-

ture that befell me at Cheltenham—never mind now—but, believe me, I am no stranger to those tender feelings, Mrs. Delaval, to which we men of the sword—ah, ah—are *infernally* addicted. What? Well, ma'am, there's my niece now, they all want to marry her. Every scoundrel within fifty miles wants to lead Blanche to the altar. Zounds, I'll weather 'em, the villains—excuse me, Mrs. Delaval, but to proceed—I am extremely anxious to confide my intentions to you, as I hope I may calculate on your assistance. My nephew, Charlie, to be explicit, is the—— Holloa! you woman, come back, come back, I say, you're carrying off the wrong coop. The dolt has mistaken my orders about the Cochin Chinas;—in the afternoon, if you please, Mrs. Delaval, we'll discuss the point more at leisure.'

And the General bolted through the study-window, and was presently heard in violent altercation with the lady who presided over his poultry-yard.

Though not very explicit, Mary had gathered enough from the General's confidences to conclude he was anxious to arrange a marriage eventually between the two cousins. Well! what was that to her? He certainly was a very taking boy, handsome, gentle, and high-spirited, nothing could be nicer for Blanche. And she was so fond of him; what a charming couple they would make. 'I am so glad,' thought Mary, wondering when she might congratulate the bride-elect; 'so *very* glad; dear,

how glad I am.' Why should Mary have taken such pains to assure herself how glad she was? Why did she watch the *charming couple* with an interest she had never felt before, as she joined them on their return from their morning walk? A walk, the object of which (tell it not in Bubbleton) had been to pursue the sport of rat-hunting in a certain barn, with a favourite terrier of Charlie's, a sport that Blanche was persuaded to patronise, notwithstanding her horror both of the game and the mode of its destruction, by her affection for Charlie, and her childish habit of joining him in all his pastimes and amusements. How alike they were with their delicate skin, their deep-blue eyes sparkling with exercise and excitement, and their waving brown hair clustering round each flushed and smiling face. How alike they were, and what a nice couple they certainly did make. And Mary sighed, as again she thought how *very* glad she was!

No further interview took place that day with the General, whose many avocations scarcely permitted him time for the elaborate toilette which, partly out of respect for Blanche's birthday, partly in consideration of his dinner-party, he thought it advisable to perform. He certainly did take more pains with himself than usual; and as he fixed an order or two in an unassuming place under the breast-lap of his coat, a ray of satisfaction shot through his heart that beat beneath those clasps and

medals, while the old gentleman thought aloud as usual, 'Not such a bad arrangement after all! She certainly did look very queer when I talked of Blanche's marrying. No doubt she's smitten—just like the one at Cheltenham. Bounce! Bounce! you've a deal to answer for. If ever I *do*, it's time I thought of it; don't improve by keeping. 'Pon my life, I might go further and fare worse. Zounds! there's the door-bell.'

'Lady Mount Helicon!' 'Captain Lacquers!' 'Sir' Ascot Uppercrust!' and a whole host of second-rate grandees were successively announced and ushered into the brilliantly-lighted drawing-room, to be received by the General with the *empressement* of a bachelor who is host and hostess all in one. Blanche was too young and shy to take much part in the proceedings. Charlie, of course, was late; but Bounce was in his glory, bowing to the ladies, joking with the gentlemen, and telling anecdotes to all, till the announcement of 'dinner' started him across the hall, convoying stately Lady Mount Helicon, and well nigh lost amidst the lappets and flounces of that magnificent dame, who would not have been here at all, unless she had owned an unmarried son, and a jointure entirely out of proportion to the present Lord's finances. The rest of the party paired off after their illustrious leaders. Sir Ascot Uppercrust took Blanche, who was already lost in surprise at his

taciturnity. Miss Deeper skilfully contrived to entangle young Cashley. Kate Carmine felt her heart beat happily against the arm of Captain Laurel of the Bays. Mr. Gotobed made a dash at Mary Delaval, but 'cousin Charlie,' who that instant entered the room, quietly interposed and led her off to the dining-room, leaving a heterogeneous mass of unappropriated gentlemen to scramble in as they best might. Mary was grateful for the rescue; she was glad to be near somebody she knew. With a flush of shame and anger, she had recognised Captain Lacquers, though that worthy dipped his moustaches into his soup in happy unconsciousness that the well-dressed aristocratic woman opposite him was the same indignant damsel who would once have knocked him down if she could. With all her self-possession, Mary was not blind to the fact, that her position was anomalous and ill-defined. She had found that out already by the condescending manner in which Lady Mount Helicon had bowed to her in the drawing-room. With the men she was 'that handsome lady-like Mrs. Delaval;' but with the women (your true aristocrats after all), she was *only the governess*.

Dinner progressed in the weary protracted manner that the meal does when it is one of state and ceremony. The guests did not know each other well, and were dreadfully afraid (as is too often the case in good society) of being over civil or attentive

to those whose position they had not exactly ascertained. It argues ill for one's stock of politeness when one cannot afford to part with ever so small a portion, save in expectation of a return. So Lady Mount Helicon was patronising and affable, and looked at everything, including the company, through her eye-glass; but was very distant notwithstanding; and the gentlemen hemmed, and hawed, and voted the weather detestable—aw! and the sport with the hounds—aw—very moderate—aw—(it was d—d bad, after the ladies went away); and their fair companions lisped and simpered, and ate very little, and drank as much champagne as appearances would allow; and everybody felt it an unspeakable relief when Blanche, drawing on her gloves, and blushing crimson at the responsibility, made 'the move' to Lady Mount Helicon; and the muslins all sailed away with their gloves, and fans, and pocket-handkerchiefs, rescued from under the table by their red-faced cavaliers.

When they met again over tea and coffee, things had thawed considerably. The most solemn high-breeding is not proof against an abundance of claret, and the General's hospitality was worthy of his cellar. The men had found each other out to be 'deuced good sort of fellows,' and had moreover discovered mutual tastes and mutual acquaintances which much cemented their friendships. To be sure, there was at first a partial reaction consequent upon

the difficulty of breaking through a formal circle of ladies, but this feat accomplished, and the gentlemen grouped about cup-in-hand in becoming attitudes, and disposed to look favourably on the world in general, even Sir Ascot Uppercrust laid aside his usual reserve, and asked Blanche whether she had seen anything of a round game called 'turning the tables,' which the juvenile philosopher further confided to her he opined to be 'infernal humbug.' In an instant every tongue was unloosed. Drop a subject like this amongst a well-dressed crowd and it is like a cracker—here and there it bounces, and fizzes, and explodes, amongst serious exclamations and hearty laughter. Lady Mount Helicon thought it wicked—Kate Carmine thought it 'fun'—Miss Deeper voted it charming,—Lacquers considered it 'aw—deuced scientific—aw'—and the General in high glee exclaimed, 'I vote we try.' No sooner said than done: a round mahogany table was deprived of its covering—a circle formed—hands joined with more energy than was absolutely indispensable—white arms laid in juxtaposition to dark coat-sleeves—long ringlets bent over the polished mirror-like surface; and amidst laughing entreaties to be grave, and voluble injunctions to be silent, the incantation progressed, we are bound in truth to state, with no definite result. Perhaps the spell was broken by the bursts of laughter that greeted the pompous butler's face of consternation, as, entering the room to remove

cups, etc., he found the smartly-dressed party so strangely employed. Well-bred servants never betray the slightest marks of emotion or astonishment, though we fancy their self-command is sometimes severely put to the test. But 'turning the tables' was too much for the major-domo, and he was obliged to make his exit in a paroxysm of unseemly mirth. Then came a round game of forfeits—then music—then dancing, the ladies, playing by turns—then somebody found out the night was pouring with rain, and the General declared it would be sure to clear in an hour or so, and nobody must go away till after supper. So supper appeared, and more champagne; and even Lady Mount Helicon was ready to do anything to oblige, so, being a fine musician, she volunteered to play 'The Coquette.' A chair was placed in the middle of the room, and everybody danced, the General and all. Blanche laughed till she cried; and there was but one feeling of regret when the announcement of her ladyship's carriage broke up the party, just at the moment when, in accordance with the rules of the dance, Charlie sank upon one knee before the coquette's chair, occupied by stately Mrs. Delaval. He looked like a young knight prostrate before the queen of beauty.

When Blanche laid her head upon her pillow, she thought over all her uncle's guests in succession, and decided not one was to be compared to cousin Charlie; and none was half so agreeable as Mr.

Hardingstone. Mary Delaval, on the contrary, scarcely gave a thought to Captain Lacquers, Sir Ascot Uppercrust, Captain Laurel, or even Mr. Gotobed, who had paid her great attention. No, even as she closed her eyes she was haunted by a young upturned face, with fair open brow and a slight moustache—do what she would she saw it still. She was, besides, a little distracted about the loss of one of her gloves—a white one, with velvet round the wrist—what could have become of it?

CHAPTER VII.

Boot and Saddle!

'THE GRAND MILITARY'—SPORT, BUT NOT PLEASURE—WARLIKE ADVANCES—SOME OF ALL SORTS—AN EQUESTRIAN FEAT—THEY'RE OFF—RIDING TO WIN—FOLLOW-MY-LEADER—WELL OVER AND WELL IN—HOME IN A HURRY—A CLOSE RACE—THE HEIRESS WITH MANY FRIENDS—A DAY'S AMUSEMENT.

'CARD of the running 'orses—*cor*-rect card! Major dear, you always take a card of me!' pleads a weather-worn, good-looking, smart-ribboned, card-woman, standing up to her ankles in mud on Guyville race-course. Poor thing! hers is a strange, hard, vagabond sort of life. This very morning she has heard mass (being an Irishwoman), seventeen miles off, and she will be on her legs the whole of this livelong day, and have a good supper and a hard bed, and be up at dawn to-morrow, ready and willing for a forty-mile tramp wherever money is to be made; so, in the meantime, she hands up half-a-dozen damp cards to Gaston D'Orville, now major in "The Loyals,' and this day principal acting-steward of 'The Grand Military Steeple-Chase.'

The major is but slightly altered since we saw him last at Bishop's Baffler. His tall figure may, perhaps, be a trifle fuller, and the lines of dissipation round his eyes and mouth a little deeper, while, here and there, his large whiskers and clustering hair are just sprinkled with grey; but, for all this, he is still about the finest looking man on the course, and of this fact, as of every other advantage of his position, no one is better aware than himself. Yet is he not a vain man; cool and calculating, he looks upon such 'pulls in his favour,' as he calls them, much as he would on 'a point in the odds,' mere chances in the game of life, to be made the most of when opportunity offers. He has just got upon a remarkably handsome white horse, to show the military equestrians 'the line' over which they are to have an opportunity of breaking their necks, and is surrounded by a posse of great-coated, shawl-handkerchiefed, and goloshed individuals, mostly striplings, who are nervously-ready to scan the obstacles they are destined to encounter.

There are nine starters for the great event, and professional speculators at the 'Kingmakers' Arms' are even now wagering that not above three ever reach 'home,' so low an opinion do they entertain of 'the soldiers riding,' or so ghastly do they deem the fences flagged out to prove the warriors' mettle. Four miles over a stiff country, with a large brook, and a finish in front of the grand stand, will furnish

work for the horses and excitement for the ladies, whilst the adventurous jocks are even now glancing at one another aghast at the unexpected strength and height of these impediments, which, to a man on foot, look positively awful.

'I object to this fence decidedly,' observes a weak, thin voice, which, under his multiplicity of wraps, we have some difficulty in identifying as the property of Sir Ascot Uppercrust. 'I object in the name of all the riders—it is positively dangerous—don't you agree with me?' he adds, pointing to a formidable 'double post and rail,' with but little room between, and appealing to his fellow-sufferers, who all coincide with him but one.

'Nothing for a hunter,' says the dissentient, who seeing that the exploit has to be performed in full view of the ladies in the stand, would have it worse if he could. 'Nothing for any horse that is properly ridden;—what do you say, major?'

'I agree with Kettering,' replies the major; for our friend 'Charlie' it is who is now surveying the country on foot, in a huge white great-coat, with a silver-mounted whip under his arm, and *no gloves*. He is quite the 'gentleman-rider,' and has fully made up his mind to win the steeple-chase. For this has poor Haphazard been deprived of his usual sport in the field, and trained with such severity as Mr. Snaffles has thought advisable; for this has his young master been shortening his stirrups and riding

daily gallops, and running miles up-hill to keep him in wind, till there is little left of his original self save his moustaches, which have grown visibly during the winter; and for this have the ladies of the family been stitching for days at the smartest silk-jacket that ever was made (orange and blue, with gold tags), only pausing in their labours to visit Haphazard in the stable, and bring him such numerous offerings in the shape of bread, apples, and lump-sugar, that had Mr. Snaffles not laid an embargo on all 'tit-bits' the horse would ere this have been scarcely fit to run for a saddle!

Mrs. Delaval having been as severely bitten with the sporting mania as Blanche, they are even now sitting in the grand-stand perusing the list of the starters as if their lives depended on it—and each lady wears a blue and orange ribbon in her bonnet, the general who escorts them appearing in an alarming neckcloth of the same hues.

The stand is already nearly full, and Blanche, herself not the least attraction to many of the throng, has manœuvred into a capital place with Mary by her side, and is in a state of nervous delight, partly at the gaiety of the scene, partly at the coming contest in which 'cousin Charlie' is to engage, and partly at the anticipation of the Guyville Ball, her first appearance in public, to take place this very night. Row upon row the benches have been gradually filling, till the assemblage looks like a varie-

gated parterre of flowers to those in the arena below. In that enclosed space are gathered, besides the pride of the British army, swells and dandies of every different description and calibre. Do-nothing gentlemen from London, glad to get a little fresh air and excitement so cheap. Nimrods from 'the shires' come to criticise the performances, and suggest, by implication, how much better they could ride themselves. Horse-dealers, and professional 'legs' of course, whose business it is to make the most of everything, and whose courteous demeanour is only equalled by the unblushing effrontery with which they offer 'five points' less than the odds; nor, though last not least, must we omit to mention the *élite* of Bubbleton, who have one and all cast up from 'the Spout,' as that salubrious town is sometimes denominated, as they always do cast up within reach of their favourite resort. Some of all sorts there are amongst *them*. Gentlemen of family, without incumbrances—gentlemen with incumbrances and no family—some with money and no brains—some with brains and no money—some that live upon the fat of the land,—others that live upon their wits, and pick up a subsistence therewith, bare as might be expected from the dearth of capital on which they trade. In the midst of them we recognise Frank Hardingstone, sufficiently conspicuous in his simple manly attire, amongst the chained and velveted and bedizened tigers by whom he is surrounded.

He is talking to a remarkably good-looking and particularly well-dressed man, known to nearly every one on the course as Mr. Jason, the famous steeplechase rider, who has come partly to sell Mr. Hardingstone a horse, partly to patronize the 'soldiers' performances,' and partly to enjoy the gay scene which he is even now criticising. He is good enough to express his approval of the ladies in the stand, taking them *en masse*,' though his fastidious taste cannot but admit that there are 'some weedy-looking ones amongst 'em.' All this, however, is lost upon Frank Hardingstone, who has ears only for a conversation going on at his elbow, in which he hears Blanche's name mentioned, our friend Lacquers being the principal speaker.

'Three hundred thousand—I give you my honour every penny of it!' says that calculating worthy to a speculative dandy with enormous red whiskers, 'and a *nice* girl too—devilish well read, you know, and all that.'

'I suppose old Bounce keeps a bright look-out though, don't he?' rejoins his friend, who has all the appearance of a man that can make up his mind in a minute.

'Yeees,' drawls Lacquers; 'but it might be done by a fellow with some energy—you know, she *is* engaged to young Kettering, her cousin—'family pot,' you know—and she's very spoony on him—still, I've half a mind to try.'

'Why, the cousin will probably break his neck in the course of the day; you can introduce me to-night at the ball. By the way, what are they betting about this young Kettering? can he ride any?'

'Not a yard,' replies Lacquers, as he turns away to light a cigar, whilst Lord Mount Helicon—for the red-bearded dandy is no less a person than that literary peer—dives into the ring to turn an honest '*pony*,' as he calls it, on its fluctuations.

'Look here, Mr. Hardingstone,' exclaims the observant Jason, forcibly attracting Frank's notice to a feat which, as he keeps his eyes fixed on the stand, is going on behind him. 'That's the way to put 'em at it, major! well-ridden by the Lord Harry!' and Frank turns round in time to witness, with the shouting multitude and the half-frightened ladies, the gallant manner in which D'Orville's white horse clears the double-post and rails to which Sir Ascot had objected.

The major, it is needless to say, is a dauntless horseman, and, on being remonstrated with by Sir A. and his party, on the impracticable nature of the leap which he had selected for them, and the young Mohair, of the Heavies, suggesting that the stewards should always be compelled to ride over the ground themselves, made no more ado, but turned the white horse at the unwelcome barrier, and, by dint of a fine hand and a perfectly-broken animal, went 'in and out' without touching, to the uproarious delight

of the mob, and the less-loudly expressed admiration of the ladies.

'That's what I call *in-and-out clever*,' observes Mr. Jason, as the shouting subsides, thinking he could not have done it better himself—and he too elbows his way into the mass of noise, hustling, and confusion that constitutes the betting-ring.

'We ought to throw our 'bouquets' at the white horse!' says Mrs. Delaval's next neighbour, a bold-looking lady of a certain age; and Mary recognises, with mingled feelings, her military adorer, and his well-known grey charger, now showing the lapse of time only by his change of colour to pure white. 'I'm afraid it's all very dangerous,' thinks Blanche, to whom it occurs for the first time that 'Cousin Charlie' may possibly break his neck; but the General at this instant touches her elbow to introduce 'Major D'Orville,' who, having performed his official duties, has dismounted, and works his way into the stand to make the agreeable to the ladies, and 'have a look at this Miss Kettering—the very thing, by Jove, if she is tolerably lady-like.'

How different is the Major's manner to that of Lacquers, Uppercrust, and half the other unmeaning dandies whom Blanche is accustomed to see fluttering round her. He *has* the least thing of a military swagger which most women certainly like, more particularly when in their own case that lordly demeanour is laid aside for a soft deferential air,

highly captivating to the weaker sex; and nobody understands this better than D'Orville. The little he says to Blanche is quiet, amusing, and to the purpose. The heiress is agreeably surprised. The implied homage of such a man is, to say the least of it, flattering; and our cavalier has the good sense to take his leave as soon as he sees he has made a favourable impression, quite satisfied with the way in which he has 'opened the trenches.' At the moment he did so, on turning round he encountered Mary Delaval. She looked unmoved as usual, and put out her hand to him, as if they had been in the habit of meeting every day. With a few incoherent words he bent over those long well-shaped fingers, and an observant by-stander might have had the good-luck to witness a somewhat unusual sight—a Major of Hussars blushing to the very tips of his moustaches! Yes—the hardened man-of-the-world—the experienced *roué*—the dashing *militaire* had a heart, if you could only get at it, like the veriest clown then 'squiring his red-faced Dolly to 'the races'—the natural for the moment overcame the artificial, and as Gaston edged his way down through nodding comrades and smiling ladies, the feeling uppermost in his heart was—'Heavens! how I love this woman still!—and what a fool I am!' But sentiment must not be indulged to the exclusion of business, and the Major too forces his way into the betting-ring.

There they are, hard at it—*Nobblers* and noble-

men—grooms and gentlemen—betting-house keepers and cavalry officers—all talking at once, all intent on having the best of it, and apparently all layers and no takers—'Eight to one agin Lady Lavender,' says a stout capitalist, who looks like a grazier in his best clothes: 'Take ten,' lisps the owner, a young gentleman apparently about sixteen—'I 'll back Sober John '—'I ll take nine to two about the Fox' 'I'll lay against the field *bar three*'—'I'll lay five ponies to two *agin* Haphazard!' vociferates the capitalist: 'Done,' cries Charlie, who is investing on his horse as if he owned the Bank of England. At this moment Frank Hardingstone pierces into the ring, and drawing Charlie towards the outskirts, begins to lecture him on the coming struggle, and to give him useful hints on the art of riding a steeple-chase, for Frank with his usual decision has resolved not to go into the stand to talk to Blanche till he has done all in his power to insure the success of her cousin: 'Come and see the horse saddled, you conceited young jackanapes—don't fool away any more money—how do you know you 'll win?' says Frank, taking the excited jockey by the arm and leading him away to where Haphazard, pawing and snorting and very uneasy, is being stripped of his clothing, the centre of an admiring throng. 'I know he can beat Lady Lavender,' replies Charlie, whose conversation for the last week has been strictly 'Newmarket'—'and he's five

pounds better than the Fox—and Mohair is sure to make a mess of it with Bendigo—he owns he can't ride him—and there's nothing else has a chance except Sober John, a great half-bred brute!'

'Do you see that quiet-looking man talking to Jason there?' says Frank—'that's the man who is to ride Sober John—about the best *gentleman* in England, and he's getting a hint from the best *professional.* Do you think *you* can ride like Captain Rocket? Now take my advice, Charlie, Haphazard is a nice-tempered horse, you *wait* on Sober John—keep close behind him—ride over him if he falls—but whatever you see Captain Rocket do, *you do the same*—don't *come* till you're safe over the last fence—and if you're not first you'll be second!' Charlie promised faithfully to obey his friend's directions—though in his own mind he did not think it possible an *Infantry* horse could win the great event—Sober John, if he belonged to any one in particular, being the property of Lieutenant Sharpes of the Old Hundredth—who stood to win a very comfortable sum upon the veteran steeple-chaser.

'They look nervous, Tim, most on 'm,' observes Captain Rocket, while with his own hands he adjusts 'the tackle,' as he calls it, on his horse; and his friend 'Tim' giving him a 'leg up,' he canters 'Sober John' past the stand, none of the ladies thinking that docile animal has the remotest chance of winning. 'He seems much too quiet,' says Blanche,

'and he's dreadfully ugly.' 'Beauty is not absolutely essential in *horses*, Miss Kettering,' replies a deep quiet voice at her elbow. Major D'Orville has resumed his place by her side. Though he thinks he is paying attention to Blanche, he cannot in reality forbear hovering about Mrs. Delaval. That lady meanwhile, with clasped hands, is hoping with all her heart that Captain Rocket may *not win*. If 'wishes were horses,' we think this young gentleman now tearing down the course upon Haphazard, throwing the dirt around him like a patent turnip-cutter, would have a good many of hers to bear him on his victorious career. By the way, Mary has never found her glove, we wonder whether that foolish boy knows anything about it—and talking of gloves, look at that dazzling pair of white kids on a level with his chin, in which 'Mohair of the Heavies' is endeavouring to control Bendigo. He has had two large glasses of sherry, yet does he still look very pale—another, and yet another comes striding past like a whirlwind—Sir Ascot rides Lady Lavender, and Cornet Capon is to pilot the Fox. It is very difficult to know which is which amongst the variegated throng, and the ladies puzzle sadly over their cards, in which, as is usually the case at steeple-chases, the colours are all set down wrong. Each damsel, however, has one favourite at least whom she could recognise in any disguise, and we may be sure that 'blue-and-orange' is not without his well-wishers in the grand-stand.

Major D'Orville is an admirable cicerone, inasmuch as besides being steward, he has a heavy book on the race, and knows the capabilities of each horse to a pound, whatever may be his uncertainty as regards the riders. 'Your cousin has a very fair chance, Miss Kettering—he seems to ride uncommonly well for *such a boy*—Sir Ascot wants nerve, and Mohair can't manage his horse.' 'See—they 've got 'em in line,' exclaims the General, who is in a state of frantic excitement altogether. 'Silence, pray! he 's going to—ah, the blundering blockhead, it 's a false start!' Major D'Orville takes out his double-glasses, and proceeds quietly without noticing the interruption, 'then the Fox has been lame, and Capon is a sad performer, nevertheless you shall have your choice, Miss Kettering, and I'll bet you a pair of gloves on the—by Jove they 're off'—and the Major puts his glasses up in scarcely veiled anxiety, whilst Mary Delaval's heart beats thick and fast, as she strains her eyes towards the fleeting tulip-coloured throng, drawing gradually out from the dark mass of spectators that have gone to witness the start.

How easy it looks to go cantering along over a nice grass country, properly flagged out so as to ensure the performers from making any mistakes; and how trifling the obstacles appear over which they are following each other like a string of wild-geese, more particularly when you, the spectator, are quietly

ensconced in a comfortable seat sheltered from the wind, and viewing the sports at a respectful distance. Perhaps you might not think it quite such child's play, were you assisting in the pageant on the back of a headstrong powerful horse, rendered irritable and violent by severe training (of which discipline this unfortunate class of animal gets more than enough), rasping your knuckles against his withers, and pulling your arms out of their sockets, because he, the machine, is all anxiety to get to the end, whilst you, the controlling, or who ought to be, the controlling power, have received strict injunctions 'to wait.' If your whole energies were not directed to the one object of 'doing your duty' and winning your race, you might possibly have leisure to reflect on your somewhat hazardous position. 'Neck-or-nothing' has just disappeared, doubling up himself and Mr. Fearless in a complicated kind of fall, at the very place over which you must necessarily follow; and should your horse, who is shaking his head furiously, as you vainly endeavour to steady him, make the slightest mistake, you shudder to think of 'Frantic' running away with her rider close behind you. Nevertheless, it is impossible to decline 'eternal misery on this side and certain death on the other,' but *go you must*, and when safe into the next field, there is nothing of any importance till you come to the brook. To be sure the animal you are riding never would *face water*. Still your spurs are sharp, and

you have a vague sort of trust that you may get over *somehow*. You really deserve to win, yet will we, albeit unused to computation of the odds, willingly bet you five to four, that you are neither first nor second.

In the meantime our friends in the stand make their running commentaries on the race. 'How slow they are going,' says Blanche, who, like all ladies, has a most liberal idea of 'pace.' '*He's over!*' mutters Mary Delaval, as 'blue-and-orange' skims lightly over the first fence undistinguished, save by *her*, amidst the rest. 'One down!' says a voice, and there is a slight scream from amongst the prettiest of the bonnets. 'Red-and-white cap—who is it?' and what with the distraction of watching the others, and the confusion on the cards, Bendigo has been caught and remounted ere the hapless Lieutenant Mohair can be identified. Meanwhile the string is lengthening out. 'Uppy is making frightful running,' says Major D'Orville, thinking how right he was to stand heavily against Lady Lavender; 'however, the Fox is close upon him; and that's Haphazard, Miss Kettering, just behind Sober John.' 'Two—four—six—seven—nine—what a pretty sight!' says Blanche, but she turns away her head with a shudder as a party-coloured jacket goes down at the next fence, neither horse nor rider rising again. One always fancies the worst, and Mary turns pale as death, and clasps her hands tighter than ever. And now they arrive at

the double-post-and-rails, which have been erected purposely for the gratification of the ladies in the stand. The first three bound over it in their stride like so many deer. Captain Rocket pulls his horse into a trot, and Sober John goes in-and-out quite as cleverly as did the Major's white charger. Mr. Jason is good enough to express his approval. Charlie follows the example of his leader; and though he hits it very hard, Haphazard's fine shape saves him from a fall. Blanche thinks him the noblest hero in England, and nobody but D'Orville remarks how very pale Mrs. Delaval is getting. Mohair essays to follow the example thus set him, and succeeds in doing the first half of his task admirably, but no power on earth will induce Bendigo to jump *out* after jumping *in*, and eventually he is obliged to be ignominiously extricated by a couple of carpenters and a hand-saw. His companions diverge, like a flight of wild-fowl, towards the brook. The Fox, who is now leading, refuses; and the charitable Nimrods, and dandies, and swells, and professionals all vote that Capon's heart failed him, and 'he didn't put in half enough powder.' The Major knows better. The horse was once his property, and he has not laid against it without reason. The brook creates much confusion; but Sober John singles himself out from the ruck, and flies it without an effort, closely followed by Haphazard and Lady Lavender. The rest splash and struggle, and get over as they best can, with but

little chance now of coming up with the first three. They all turn towards home, and the pace is visibly increasing. Captain Rocket is leading, but Charlie's horse is obviously full of running, and the boy is gradually drawing away from Lady Lavender, and nearer and nearer to the front. Already people begin to shout 'Haphazard wins;' and the General is hoarse with excitement. 'Charlie wins!' he exclaims, his face purple, and the ends of his blue-and-orange handkerchief floating on the breeze. 'Charlie wins! I tell you. Look how he's coming up. Zounds! don't contradict *me*, sir!' he roars out, to the intense dismay of his next neighbour, a meek old gentleman, who has only come to the steeple-chase in order that he may write an account of it for a magazine, and who shrinks from the General as from a raving madman. 'Now, Captain Rocket,' shouts the multitude, as if that unmoved man would attend to anything but the business in hand. They reach the last fence neck-and-neck, Haphazard landing slightly in advance. 'Kettering wins!' '*Blast* him!' hisses D'Orville between his teeth, turning white as a sheet. He stands to lose eighteen hundred by Haphazard alone, and we question whether, on reliable security, the Major could raise eighteenpence. Nevertheless he turns the next instant to Blanche, with a quiet unmoved smile, to congratulate her on her cousin's probable success. 'If he can only 'finish,' Miss Kettering, he can't lose,' says the speculator;

but he still trusts that 'if' may save him the price of his commission.

What a moment for Charlie! Hot, breathless, and nearly exhausted; his brain reeling with the shouts of the populace, and the wild excitement of the struggle, one idea is uppermost in his mind, if man and horse can do it, *win he will.* Steadily has he ridden four long miles, taking the greatest pains with his horse, and restraining his own eagerness to be in front, as well as that of the gallant animal. He has kept his eye fixed on Captain Rocket, and regulated his every movement by that celebrated performer. And now he is drawing slightly in advance of him, and one hundred yards more will complete his triumph. Yet, inexperienced as he is, he cannot but feel that Haphazard is no longer the elastic, eager goer whom he has been regulating so carefully, and the truth shoots across him that his horse is beat. Well, he ought to last another hundred yards. See, the double flags are waving before him, and the shouts of his own name fall dully upon his ear. He hears Captain Rocket's whip at work, and is not aware how that judicious artist is merely plying it against his own boot, to flurry the young one. Charlie begins to flog. 'Sit *still!*' shouts Frank Hardingstone from the stand. Charlie works arms and legs like a windmill, upsets his horse, who would win if he were but let alone—'Sober John' shews his great ugly head alongside. Haphazard changes

his leg—Major D'Orville draws a long breath of relief—Captain Rocket, with a grim smile, and one fierce stab of his spurs, glides slightly in advance—and Haphazard is beaten on the post by half a length, Lady Lavender a bad third, and the rest nowhere! * * * *

Blanche is dreadfully disappointed. The General thinks 'the lad deserves great credit for being second in such good company;' but the tears stand in Mary Delaval's eyes—tears, we believe, of gratitude at his not being brought home on a hurdle, instead of riding into the weighing-enclosure with the drooping self-satisfied air, and the arms hanging powerless down his sides, which distinguish the gentleman-jockey after his exertions. The boy is scarcely disappointed. To have been so near winning, and to have run second for such an event as 'the Grand Military,' is a feather in his cap of which he is in no slight degree proud; and he walks into the stand the hero of the day, for Captain Rocket is no lady's man, and is engaged to risk his neck again to-morrow a hundred miles from here. So he has put on a long great coat and disappeared. The General accounts for Charlie's defeat on a theory peculiarly his own. '*Virtually*,' says he, 'my nephew won the race. How dy'e mean *beat*? It was twenty yards over the four miles. Twenty yards from home he was a length in front. If the stewards had been worth their salt, we should have won. Don't tell *me*!'

There is more racing, but the great event has come off, and our friends in the stand occupy themselves only with luncheon. Frank Hardingstone comes up to speak to Blanche, but she is so surrounded and hemmed in, that beyond shaking hands with her, he might as well be back at his own place on the South Coast, for any enjoyment he can have in her society. Major D'Orville is rapidly gaining ground in the good graces of all the Newton-Hollows party. He has won a large stake, and is in brilliant spirits. Even Mary thinks 'what an agreeable man he is,' and glances the while at a fair glowing face, eating, drinking, and laughing by turns, and discussing with Sir Ascot the different events of their exciting gallop. Lacquers, with his mouth full, is making the agreeable in his own way, to the whole party. 'Deuced good pie—aw—ruin me—aw—in gloves Miss Kettering—aw—lose everything to you—aw;' and the dandy has a vague sort of notion that he might say something sweet here, but it will not shape itself into words very conveniently, so he has a large glass of sherry instead. Our friend Captain Lacquers is not so much a 'man of parts,' as 'a man of figure.' Charlie, somewhat excited, flourishes his knife and fork, and describes how he lost his race to the public in general. Gaston D'Orville with his most deferential air, is winning golden opinions from Blanche, and thinking in his innermost soul what a traitor he is to his own heart the while; Mrs. Delaval looks

very pale and subdued, and Bounce thinks she must be tired, but breaks off to something else before he has made the inquiry — still everybody seems outwardly to be enjoying him or herself to the utmost, and it is with a forced smile and an air of assumed gaiety that Frank Hardingstone takes his leave, and supposes 'we shall all meet at the ball.'

Fancy Frank deliberately proposing to go to a ball! How bitterly he smiles as he walks away from the course faster and faster, as thought after thought goads him to personal exertion! Now he despises himself thoroughly for his weakness in allowing the smile of a silly girl thus to sink into a strong man's heart—now he analyses his own feelings as he would probe a corporeal wound, with a stern, scientific pleasure in the examination—and anon he speculates vaguely on the arrangements of Nature, which provide him with sentimental follies for a *sauce piquante* wherewith to flavour our daily bread. Nevertheless our man of action is by no means satisfied with himself. He takes a fierce walk over the most unfrequented fields, and returns to his solitary lodgings, to read stiff chapters of old dogmatic writers, and to work out a tough equation or two, till he can 'get this nonsense out of his head.' In vain—a fairy figure with long violet eyes and floating hair dances between him and his quarto, and the 'unknown quantity' *plus* Blanche continually eludes his mental grasp.

We do not think Frank has enjoyed his day's pleasure, any more than Mary Delaval. How few people do, could we but peep into their heart of hearts! Here are two, at least, of that gay throng, in whom the shaft is rankling, and all this discomfort and anxiety exists, because, forsooth, people never understand each other in time. We think it is in one of Rousseau's novels that the catastrophe is continually being postponed because the heroine invariably becomes *vivement émue*, and unable to articulate, just at the critical moment when two words more would explain everything, and make her happy with her adorer. Were it not for this provoking weakness, she would be married and settled long before the end of the first volume: but then, to be sure, what would become of all the remaining pages of French sentimentality? If there were no uncertainty, there would be no romance—if we knew each other better, perhaps we should love each other less. Hopes and fears make up the game of life. Better be the germinating flower, blooming in the sunshine and cowering in the blast, than the withered branch, defiant indeed of winter's cold and summer's heat, but drinking in no dew of morning, putting forth no buds of spring, and in its dreary, barren isolation, unsusceptible of pleasure as of pain.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Ball.

THE COUNTRY BALL—A POETICAL PEER—BLANCHE'S PARTNERS—SMILES AND SCOWLS—MAMMA'S ADVICE—THE GENERAL'S POLITICS—THE MAJOR'S STRATEGY—'HOME'—THE DREAMER—THE SLEEPER—AND THE WATCHER.

BUSTLE and confusion reign paramount at 'the Kingmakers' Arms'—principal hotel and posting-house in the town of Guyville. Once a year is there a great lifting of carpets, and shifting of furniture, in all the rooms of that enterprising establishment. Chambermaids hurry to and fro in smart caps, brought out for the occasion, and pale-faced waiters brandish their glass-cloths in despair at the variety of their duties. All the resources of the plate-basket are brought into use, and knives, forks, tumblers, wine-glasses, German silver and Britannia metal are collected, and borrowed, and furbished up, to grace the evening's entertainment with a magnificence becoming the occasion. Dust pervades the passages, and there is a hot smell of cooking and closed windows, by which the frequenters of the house are made aware that to-night is the anniversary of the Guyville Ball, a solemnity to be spoken of with reverence by the very ostler's assistant in the

yard, who will tell you '*we* are very busy, sir, just now, sir, on account of *the ball*.' Tea-rooms, card-rooms, supper-rooms, dancing-rooms, and cloak-rooms, leave but few apartments to be devoted to the purposes of rest; and an unwary bagman, snoring quietly in No. 5, might chance to be smothered ere morning by the heap of cloaks, shawls, polka-jackets, and other lady-like wraps, ruthlessly heaped upon the unconscious victim in his dormitory. The combined attractions of steeple-chasing and dancing bring numerous young gentlemen and their valets to increase the confusion; and, were it not that the six o'clock train takes back the Londoners and 'professionals' to the metropolis, it would be out of the power of mortal functionaries to attend to so many wants, and wait upon so many customers.

That tall, pale, interesting-looking man in chains and ringlets has already created much commotion below with his insatiable demands for foot-baths and hot water. As he waits carelessly in the passage at that closed door, receiving and returning the admiring glances of passing chamber-maids, you would hardly suppose from his unassuming demeanour, that he is no less a person than Lord Mount-Helicon's *gentleman*. To be sure, he is now what he calls 'comparatively incog.' It is only at his club in Piccadilly, or 'the room' at Wassailworth, where he and the Duke's 'own man' lay down the law upon racing, politics, wine, and women, that he is to be

seen in his full glory. To give him his due, he is an admirable servant, as far as his own duties are concerned, and a clever fellow to boot, or he would not have picked up seven-and-thirty pounds to-day on the steeple-chase whilst he was looking after the luncheon and the carriage. We question, however, whether he could complete his toilette as expeditiously as his master, who is now stamping about his room, reciting, in an audible voice, a thundering ode on which he has been some considerable time engaged, and elaborating the folds of his white neck-cloth (old fifth-form tie) between the stanzas.

Lord Mount Helicon is a literary nobleman; not one of

> Your authors who's all author, fellows
> In foolscap uniforms turned up with ink;

but a sportsman as well as a scholar, a man of the world as well as a man of letters, given over much to betting, horse-racing, and dissipation in general, but with as keen a zest for the elegancies of literature as for those beauties of the drama to which he pays fully more attention, and one who can compute you the odds as readily as he can turn a lyric or round a flowing period. Had his lordship possessed a little more common sense and a slight modicum of prudence, forethought, reflection, and such plebeian qualities, he need not have failed in any one thing he undertook. As it was, his best friends regretted he should waste his talents so unsparingly on versifi-

cation; whilst his enemies (the bitter dogs) averred, 'Mount Helicon's rhyme was, if possible, worse than his reason.' Being member for Guyville (our readers will probably call to mind how the columns of their daily paper were filled with the Guyville Election Committee's Report, and the wonderful appetite for 'treating' displayed by the 'free and independent' of that town during their 'three glorious days')—being member, then, of course it is incumbent on him to attend the ball; so, after a hurried dinner with Lacquers, Sir Ascot, Major D'Orville, and sundry other gentlemen who *live* every day of their lives, behold him curling his red whiskers, and attiring his tall gaunt form in a suit of decorous black.

'Deuced bad dinner they give one here,' says his lordship to himself, still hammering away at the ode. 'Wish I hadn't drank that second bottle of claret, and smoked so much.

> When the thunders of a people smite the quailing despot's ear,
> And the earthquake of rebellion heaves—

No, I can't get it right. How those cursed fiddlers are scraping!—and either that glass maligns me, or I look a little drunk! This life don't suit my style of beauty—something must be done: shall I marry and pull up? Marry—will I! Bow my cultivated intellect before some savage maiden, and fatten like a tethered calf on the flat swamps of domestic re-

spectability. Straps! go down and find out if many of the people are come.'

'Several of the town's-people have arrived, my lord; but few of the county families as yet,' replies Straps, whose knowledge of a member of parliament's duties would have qualified him to represent Guyville as well as his master. Lord Mount Helicon accordingly completes his toilet and proceeds to the ball-room, still mentally harping on 'the thunders of a people,' and 'the quailing despot's ear.'

The town's-people have indeed arrived in very sufficient numbers, yet is there a strong line of demarcation between their plebeian ranks and those of 'the county families' huddled together at the upper end of the room. Britannia! Britannia! when will you cease to bring your coat-of-arms into society, and to smother your warm heart and sociable nature under pedigrees, and rent-rolls, and dreary conventionalities? When you do, you will enjoy yourself all the more, and be respected none the less. You will be equally efficient as a chaperon, though the trident be not always pointed on the defensive; and the lion may be an excellent watch-dog, without being trained to growl at every fellow creature who does not happen to keep a carriage. His lordship's business, however, lies chiefly with those, so to speak, below the salt. Voters are they, or, more important still, voters' wives and daughters, and, as such, must be propitiated, for Mount Helicon, we need scarcely

inform our readers, is not an English peerage, and my lord may probably require to sit again for the same incorruptible borough.

So he bows to *this* lady, and flirts with *that*, and submits to be patted on the shoulder and twaddled to by a fat little man, primed with port, but who, when not thus bemused, is an influential member of his committee, and a staunch supporter on the hustings. Nay more, with an effort that he deserves infinite credit for concealing with such good grace, he offers his arm to the red-haired daughter of his literally *warm* supporter, and leads the well-pleased damsel, blushing much, and mindful 'to keep her head up,' right away to the county families' quadrille at the top of the room, where she dances *vis-à-vis*—actually *vis-à-vis*—to Miss Kettering and Captain Lacquers.

That gentleman is considerably brightened up by his dinner and his potations. He has besides got his favourite boots on, and feels equal to almost any social emergency, so he is making the agreeable to the heiress with that degree of originality so peculiarly his own, and getting on, as he thinks, 'like a house on fire.'

'Very *wawm*, Miss Kettering, observes the dandy, holding steadily by his starboard moustache. 'Guyville people always make it so hot. Charming *bouquet*.'

'Your *vis-à-vis* is dancing alone,' says Blanche, cutting short her partner's interesting remarks, and

sending him sprawling and swaggering across the room, only to hasten back again and procced with his conversation.

'You know the man opposite—man with the red whiskers? That 's Mount Helicon. Good fellow—aw—if he could but dye his whiskers. Asked to be introduced to *you* to-day on the course. Told him—aw—I couldn't take such a liberty.' Lacquers wishes to say he would like to keep her society all to himself, but, as usual, he cannot express clearly what he means, so he twirls his moustaches instead, and is presently lost in the intricacies of 'La Poule.' We need hardly observe that manœuvring is not our friend's forte. Blanche's eyes meanwhile are turned steadily towards the lower end of the room, and her partner's following their direction, he discovers as he thinks a fresh topic of conversation. 'Ah! there 's Hardingstone just come in. Aw—why don't he bring his wife with him, I wonder?'

'His wife!' repeated Blanche, with a start that sent the blood from her heart; 'why he 's not married, is he?' she added with more animation than she had hitherto exhibited.

'Don't know, I 'm sure,' replied the dandy, glancing down at his own faultless *chaussure*; 'thought he was—aw—looks like a married man—aw.'

'Why should you think so?' inquired Blanche, half amused in spite of herself.

'Why—aw,' replied the observant reasoner, 'got

the married *look* you know. Wears wide family boots. Aw—do to ride the children on you know.'

Blanche could not repress a laugh; and the quadrille being concluded, off she went with 'cousin Charlie,' to stagger through a breathless polka, just at the moment the 'family boots' bore their owner to the upper end of the room in search of her.

Frank was out of his element, and thoroughly uncomfortable.—Generally speaking, he could adapt himself to any society into which he happened to be thrown, but to-night he was restless and out of spirits; dissatisfied with Blanche, with himself for being so, and with the world in general. 'What a parcel of fools these people are,' thought he, as with folded arms he leaned against the wall and gazed vacantly on the shifting throng; 'jigging away to bad music in a hot room, and calling it pleasure. What a waste of time, and energy, and everything. Now there's little Blanche Kettering. I *did* think that girl was superior to the common run of women. I fancied she had a heart, and a mind, and 'brains,' and was above all the petty vanities of flirting, and fiddling, and dressing, which a posse of idiots dignify with the name of society. But no, they are all alike, giddy, vain, and frivolous. There she is, dancing away with as light a heart as if 'cousin Charlie' were not under orders for the Cape, and to start to-morrow morning. *She* don't care—not she! I wonder if she *will* marry him, should he ever come

back. I have never liked to ask him, but everybody seems to say it 's a settled thing. How changed she must be since we used to go out in the boat at St. Swithin's, and yet how little altered she is in features from the child I was so fond of. It 's disappointing!' And Frank ground his teeth with subdued ferocity. 'It 's disgusting! She 's not half-good enough for Charlie. I 'll never believe in one of them again!'

Well, if not 'half good enough for Charlie,' we mistake much whether, even at the very moment of condemnation, our philosopher did not consider her quite 'good enough for Frank'; and could he but have known the young girl's thoughts while he judged her so harshly, he would have been much more in charity with the world in general, and looked upon the rational amusement of dancing in a light more becoming a sensible man, which, to do him justice, he generally was.

Blanche even as she wound and threaded through the mazes of a crowded polka, skilfully steered by 'cousin Charlie,' who was a beautiful dancer, and one of whose little feet would scarcely have served to 'ride a fairy,' was wondering in her own mind why Mr. Hardingstone had not asked her to dance, and why he had been so distant at the steeple-chase, and speculating whether it was possible he could be married. How she hoped Mrs. Hardingstone, if there should be one, was *a nice person*, and how fond she would be of her, and yet few people were worthy of

him. How noble and manly he looked to-night amongst all the dandies. She would rather see Mr. Hardingstone frown than any one else smile—there was nobody like him except, perhaps, Major D'Orville, he had the same quiet voice, the same self-reliant manner, but then the Major was much older. O no—there was nothing equal to Frank—and how she *liked* him, he was *such* a friend of Charlie—and just as Blanche arrived at this conclusion, the skirt of her dress got entangled in Cornet Capon's spur, and Charlie laughed so (the provoking boy!) that he could not set her free, and the Cornet's apologies were so absurd, and everybody stared so, it was quite disagreeable! But a tall manly figure interposed between her and the crowd, and Major D'Orville released her in an instant; and that deep winning voice engaged her for the next dance, and she could not but comply, though she had rather it had been some one else. Frank saw it all, still with his arms folded, and misjudged her again, as men do those of whom they are fondest. 'How well she does it, the little coquette,' he thought, 'it's a good piece of acting all through—now she'll flirt with D'Orville becaue he happens to be a great man here, and then she'll throw *him* over for some one else, and so they 'keep the game alive.'' Frank! Frank! you ought to be ashamed of yourself!

In the meantime, Lord Mount Helicon must not

neglect a very important part of the business which has brought him to Guyville. In the pocket of his Lordship's morning coat is a letter which Straps, who has taken that garment down to brush, in the natural course of things is even now perusing. As its contents may somewhat enlighten *us* as well as the valet, we will take the liberty of peeping over that trusty domestic's shoulder, and joining him in his pursuit of knowledge, premising that the epistle is dated Brook-street, and is a fair specimen of maternal advice to a son. After the usual gossip regarding Mrs. Bolter's elopement and Lady Susan Stiff-neck's marriage, with the indispensable conjectures about 'Ministers,' a body in whose precarious position ladies of a certain age take an unaccountable interest; the letter goes on to demonstrate 'that it is needless to point out, my dear Mount, the advantages you would obtain under your peculiar circumstances by settling early in life. When I was at Bubbleton last autumn (and Globus says I have never been so well since he attended me when you were born—in fact the spasms left me altogether)—I made the acquaintance of a General Bounce, an odious vulgar man, who had been all his life somewhere in India, but who had a niece, a quiet amiable girl, by name Kettering, with whom I was much pleased. They have a nice place, though damp, somewhere in the neighbourhood of your borough, and I dined there once or twice before I left Bubbleton. Everything

looked like a *maison montée,* and from information I can rely on, I understand the girl is a great heiress. Between ourselves, Lady Champfront told me she would have from three to four hundred thousand pounds. Now, although I should be the last person to hint at your selling yourself for money, particularly with your talents and your position, yet if you should happen to see this young lady, and take a fancy to her, it would be a very nice thing, and would make you quite independent. She is pretty-ish, in the 'Jeannette and Jeannot' style, and although her manner is not the least formed, she has no *prononcé* vulgarity, and would soon acquire our 'ways' when she came to live amongst us. Of course we should drop the General immediately; and, my dear boy, I trust you would give up that horrid racing—young Cubbington, who has hardly left school, is already nearly ruined by it, and Lady Looby is in despair,—such a mother too as she has been to him! By-the-bye there is a cousin *in our way,* but he is young enough to be in love only with himself, and appeared to me to be rather making up to the governess! Think of this, my dear 'Mount,'

'And believe me

'Your most affectionate mother,

'M. Mt. Helicon.

'P.S.—Your book is much admired—Trifles *raves* about it, and your old friend Mrs. Blacklamb assures me that *it made her quite ill.*'

Primed with such sage counsel, his Lordship determined to lose no time in 'opening the trenches.' After enacting sundry duty-dances, by which he had gained at least one prospective 'plumper,' he accordingly 'completed the first parallel' by obtaining an introduction to General Bounce, which ceremony Captain Lacquers performed in his usual easy off-hand style—the introducer shouting into each man's ear his listener's *own* name, and suppressing altogether that of his new acquaintance, an ingenious method of presenting people to each other without furthering their intimacy to any great extent. The General, however, and the member had known each other previously by sight as well as by name, the former having voted and spoken against the latter at the past election, with his peculiar abruptness and energy; but Mount Helicon was the last man in the world to owe an antagonist a grudge, and being keenly alive to the ridiculous, was prepared to be delighted with his political opponent in whom he saw a fund of absurdity, out of which he promised himself much amusement.

'Glad to make your acquaintance, my Lud,' said the General, standing well behind his orders and decorations, which showed to great advantage on a coat tightly buttoned across his somewhat corpulent frame—'Don't like your politics—what? never did—progress and all that, sir, not worth a row of gingerbread—don't tell *me*—why, what did Lord

Hindostan say to me at Government House, when they threatened to report me at home for exceeding my orders? 'Bounce,' says his Excellency —, Bounce, *I'll see you through it*—what? *nothing like a big stick for a nigger. Stick,* how d'ye mean?'—and the speaker, who was beginning to foam at the mouth, suddenly changed his tone to one of the sweetest politeness, as he introduced 'my niece, Miss Kettering, Lord Mount Helicon.' A second time was Frank Hardingstone forestalled; he had just made up his mind that he would dance with Blanche only *once*, sun himself yet *once* again in her sweet smile, and then think of her no more—a sensible resolution, but not very easy to carry out. Of course he laid the blame on her. 'First she makes a fool of D'Orville,' thought he, 'a man old enough to be her father—and now she whisks away with this red-bearded radical—to make a fool of him too, unless she means to throw over Charlie, and who is the greatest fool of the three? Why, you, Frank Hardingstone, who ought to know better. I shall go home, smoke a cigar, and go to bed—the dream is over; I had no idea it would be so unpleasant to wake from it.' So Frank selected his hat, pulled out his cigar-case, and trudged off, by no means in a philosophical or even a charitable frame of mind.

There was a light twinkling in the window of his lodgings over the Saddler's, some three hours afterwards, when a carriage drove rapidly by, bearing

a freight of pleasure-seekers home from the ball. Inside were the General and Blanche, the former fast asleep, wrapped in the dreamless slumbers which those enjoy who have reached that time of life when the soundness of the stomach is far more attended to than that of the heart—when sentiment is of small account, but digestion of paramount importance. Age, as it widens the circle of our affections, weakens their intensity, and although proverbially 'there is no fool like an old one,' we question if in the present day there are many Anacreons who—

> 'When they behold the festive train
> Of dancing youth, are young again;'

or who, however little they might object to celebrating her charms 'in the bowl,' would, for 'soft Bathylla's sake,' wreathe vine-leaves round their grizzled heads. No—Age is loth to make itself ridiculous in *that* way; and the General snored and grunted, heart-whole and comfortable, by the side of his pretty niece. How pretty she looked—a little pale from over-excitement and fatigue, but her violet eyes all the deeper and darker from the contrast, whilst none but her maid would have thought the long golden brown hair spoiled by hanging down in those rich uncurling clusters. She was like the pale blush rose in her bouquet—more winning as it droops in half-faded loveliness, than when first it bloomed, bright and crisp, in its native conservatory. The

flower yields its fragrance all the sweeter for being shaken by the breeze. Who but a cousin or a brother would have gone on the box to smoke, with such a girl as Blanche inside? Yet so it was. Master Charlie, who danced, as he did everything else, with his whole heart and soul, could not forego the luxury of a cigar, in the cool night air, after the noise and heat and revelry of the ball. As he puffed volumes of smoke into the air, and watched the bright stars twinkling down through the clear pure night, his thoughts wandered far—far into the future, and he, too, felt that the majesty of a sad sweet face had impressed itself on his being, that she had been watching him to-day through his boyish exploits, and that her eye would kindle, her cheek would glow, when military honours and distinction were heaped upon him, as heaped he was resolved they should be, if ever an opportunity offered. To-morrow his career would begin!—To-morrow, aye, even to-day (for it was already past mid-night), he was to embark for the Cape; and scarce a thought of the bitterness of parting, perhaps for ever, shaded that bright young imagination, as it sketched out for itself its impossible romance, worth all the material possibilities that have ever been accomplished. So Charlie smoked, and pondered and dreamed of beauty and valour. We do not think he was in very imminent danger of marrying his cousin.

Perhaps were he inside, his flow of spirits would

only disturb the quiet occupants. Blanche is not asleep, but she is dreaming nevertheless. With her large eyes fixed vacantly on the hedge-row trees and fences, that seem to be wheeling past her in the carriage lamp-light, she is living the last few hours of her life again, and seeing their past events more clearly, as she disentangles them from the excitement and confusion amongst which they actually occurred. Now she is dancing with Lacquers or Sir Ascot, and wondering, as she recalls their common-place chatter and trite remarks, how men so insipid can belong to the same creation as 'cousin Charlie' or another gentleman, a friend of his, of whom, for the first time in her life, she feels a little afraid. Now she laughs to herself as she recollects Cornet Capon's agony of shyness, and the burning blushes with which that diffident young officer apologised for tearing her dress. Anon she sees Major D'Orville's commanding figure and handsome manly face, while the low musical voice is still ringing in her ear, and the quiet deferential manner, softened by a protective air of kindness, has lost none of its charm. Blanche is not the first young lady, by a good many, who has gone home from a ball with a flattered consciousness that a certain gallant officer thinks her a 'very superior person,' and that the good opinion of such a man is indeed worth having. The Major was 'a dangerous man;' he betrayed no coxcombry, to mar the effect of his warlike beauty and chivalrous bearing. He

never 'sank' the profession, but always spoke of himself as 'a mere soldier,' whilst his manner was that of a 'finished gentleman.' He had distinguished himself, too, on more than one occasion; and the men all had a great opinion of him. Woman is an imitative animal; and a high reputation, especially for courage, amongst the gentlemen, goes a long way in the good graces of the ladies. Add to these the crowning advantage, that the Major, except in one instance, of which we know the facts, came into the unequal contest with a heart perfectly invulnerable and case-hardened by intercourse with the world, and a selfishness less the result of nature than education. When a man, himself untouched, makes up his mind that a woman *shall* love him, the odds are fearfully in his favour. Blanche *liked* him already; but if 'in the multitude of counsellors there is safety,' no less is there security in the multitude of admirers; and ere the Major's image had time to make more than a transient impression, that of Lord Mount Helicon chased it away, in the mental magic-lantern of our fair young dreamer. He had taken her in to supper, and how pleasant he was! so odd, but so agreeable—such command of language, and such a quaint, absurd way of saying common-place things. Not so bad-looking either, in spite of his red whiskers; and such a beautiful title! How well it would sound! and Blanche smiled at herself as the idea came across her. But a handsome manly fellow

leaning against the wall, was looking at her with a stern forbidding expression she had never seen before on that open brow, and Blanche's heart ached at the vision. Mr. Hardingstone was surely very much changed; he who used to be so frank, and kind, and good-humoured, and to lose no opportunity of petting and praising the girl he had known from a child; and to-night he had never so much as asked her to dance, and scarcely spoken to her. 'What right had he to look so cross at me?' thought the girl, with the subdued irritation of wounded feelings; 'what had I done to offend him, or why should I care whether I offend him or not? Poor fellow, perhaps he is in low spirits about 'cousin Charlie's' going away so soon.' And Blanche's eyes filled with tears—tears that she persuaded herself were but due to her cousin's early departure.

Like the rising generation in general, Charlie was a great smoker. His ideas of 'campaigning' were considerably mixed up with tobacco, and he lost no opportunity of qualifying for the bivouac by a sedulous consumption of cigars. He dashed the last bit of 'burning comfort' from his lips, as the carriage drove into the avenue at Newton-Hollows. Protracted yawns prevented much conversation during the serving-out of hand-candlesticks. Good nights were exchanged; 'We shall all see you to-morrow before you go, dear,' said Blanche, as she disappeared into her room; and soon the sighing of the night-

wind was the only sound to disturb the silence of that long range of buildings, where all were sunk in slumber and repose—all save one.

At an open window, looking steadfastly forth into the darkness, sat Mary Delaval. She had not stirred for hours, and she might have been asleep, so moveless was her attitude, had it not been for the fixed earnest expression of her dark grey eye. One round white arm rested on the window-ledge, and her long black hair fell in loose masses over the snowy garments, which, constituting a lady's 'déshabille,' reveal her beauties far less liberally than the costume she more inaptly terms 'full dress.' Mary is reasoning with herself, generally an unsatisfactory process, and one that seldom leads to any definite conclusion—sadly, soberly, and painfully, she is recalling her past life, her selfish father, her injured mother, the hardships and trials of her youth, and the ray of sunshine that has tinged the last few weeks with its golden light. She never thought to entertain folly, madness, such as this; yet would she not have had it otherwise for worlds. Bitter are the dregs, but verily the poison is more than sweet. And now he is going away, and she will never, never see him again; that fair young face will never more greet her with its thrilling smile, those kindly joyous tones never more make music for her ear.—To-morrow he will be gone.—Perhaps he may fall in action—the beautiful brow gashed—the too-well-known features cold and fixed

in death; not if prayers can avert such a fate. Perhaps he will return distinguished and triumphant; but in either case what more will the poor governess have to do with the young hero, save to love him still? Yes, she may love him *now*—love him with all her heart and soul, without restraint, without self-reproach, for she will *never* see him again. On that she is determined; their paths lie in different directions. Like two ships that meet upon the waters, and rejoice in each other's companionship, and part, and know each other no more. It was foolish to sit up for him to night, but it is the last, *last* time, and she could not resist the temptation to wait and watch even for the very wheels that bore him home: and now it is over—all over—he will never know it, but she will always think of him and pray for him, and watch over Blanche for *his* sake, and love him, adore him dotingly—madly to the last; and cold, haughty, passionless Mary Delaval leant her head upon her two white arms, and sobbed like a broken-hearted child.

We wonder if any man that walks the earth is worthy of the whole idolatrous devotion of a woman's heart. Charlie was snoring sound asleep, whilst she who loved him wept and prayed and suffered. Go to sleep, too, foolish Mary, and pleasant dreams to you: 'Sorrow has your young days shaded,' it is but fair that your nights should glow in the rosy, fancy-brightened hues of joy.

CHAPTER IX.

Want.

LODGINGS IN LONDON—A CONVIVIAL HUSBAND—THE WIFE GIVES HER OPINION—FAMILY PLEASURES—FAMILY CARES—DRESSING TO GO OUT—THE DRUNKARD'S VISITORS—CHEAP ENJOYMENT—WHO IS THE OWNER?—LONDON FOR THE POOR.

AS you walk jauntily along any of the great thoroughfares of London, you arrive, ever and anon, at one of those narrow offshoots of which you would scarcely discover the existence, were it not for the paved crossing over which you daintily pick your way, on the points of your jetty boots. All the attention you can spare from passing events is devoted to the preservation of your *chaussure*, and you do not probably think it worth while to bestow even a casual peep down that close winding alley, in which love and hate, and hopes and fears, and human joys, and miseries, and sympathies are all packed together, just as they are in your own house in Belgravia, Tyburnia, or May-fair, only considerably more cramped for room, and a good deal worse off for fresh air. That noble animal, the horse, generally occupies the ground-floor of such tenements as compose these narrow streets, whilst the dirty children of those bipeds who look after his well-

being, embryo coachmen, and helpers, and stablemen, play, and fight, and vociferate in the gutter, with considerable energy and no little noise, munching their dinners, *al fresco*, the while, with an appetite that makes dry bread a very palatable sustenance. A strong 'smell of stables' pervades the atmosphere, attributable, perhaps, to the accumulation of that agricultural wealth which, in its *right* place, produces golden harvests; and the ring of harness and stamp of steeds, varied by an occasional snort, nearly drown the plaintive street-organ, grinding away, fainter and fainter, round the corner. Shirts, stockings, and garments of which we neither know the names nor natures, hang, like Macbeth's banners, 'on the outward walls.' Washing appears to be the staple commerce, while porter seems the principal support, of these busy regions; and as the snowy water-lily rises from the stagnant marsh, so does the dazzling shirt-front, in which you will to-day appear at dinner, owe its purity to that stream of soapy starch-stained liquid now pouring its filthy volume down the gutter. Dirty drowsy-looking men clatter about with pails and other apparatus for the cleansing of carriages, whilst here and there an urchin is pounced upon and carried off by some maternal hawk, with bare arms and disordered tresses, either to return with a smeared mouth and a festive slice of bread and treacle, or to admonish its companions, by piercing cries that it is under-

going summary punishment not undeserved. The shrill organ of female volubility, we need hardly say, is in the ascendant; and we may add, that the faces generally met with, all dirty and care-worn though they be, are gilded by an honest expression of contentment peculiar to those who fulfil their destiny by working for their daily bread.

In one of the worst lodgings of such a mews as we have faintly endeavoured to describe, in a dirty, comfortless room, bare of furniture, and to which laborious access is obtained by a dilapidated wooden staircase, sits our old acquaintance, Gingham, now Mrs. Blacke, but who will never be known to 'the families in which she lived' by any other than her maiden patronymic. Though, in her best days, a lady of no fascinating exterior, she is decidedly altered for the worse since we saw her at St. Swithin's, and is now, without question, a hard-featured and repulsive-looking woman. She has lost the 'well-to-do' air, which sits more easily on those who live at 'housekeeping' than on those 'who find themselves,' and everything about her betrays a degree of poverty, if not of actual want, sadly repugnant to the habits of an orderly upper-servant in a well-regulated establishment.

Of all those who sink to hardships after having 'seen better days,' none bear privation so ill as this particular rank. They have neither the determination and energy of 'the gentle,' nor the happy care-

lessness and bodily vigour of the labouring class. It is lamentable to watch the gradual sinking of a once respectable man, who has been tempted, by the very natural desire of becoming independent, to leave 'service' and set up on his own account. From his boyhood he has been fed, housed, and clothed, without a thought or care of his own, till he has spread into the portly, grave, ponderous official, whom not even his master's guests would think of addressing save by the respectful title of 'Mister.' He has saved a 'pretty bit o' money;' and on giving warning, announces his long-concealed marriage to the housekeeper, who has perhaps saved a little more. Between them they may muster a *very* few hundred pounds; and on this inexhaustible capital they determine to set up for themselves. If he takes a public-house, it is needless to dwell on the almost inevitable catastrophe. But whatever the trade or speculation on which he embarks, he has everything to learn; education cannot be had without paying for it; business connexions cannot be made—they must *grow*. Those are positive hardships to *him*, which would scarcely be felt as wants by others of his own sphere, who had not always lived as he has, on the fat of the land. Discontent and recrimination creep into the household. The wife makes home uncomfortable, and 'the husband goes to the beer-shop.' The money dwindles—the business fails—fortunate if the family do not increase. 'Trade *never* was so

bad,' and it soon becomes a question of assignees and ten shillings in the pound. The man himself is honest, and it cuts him to the heart. Only great speculators can rise, like the Phœnix, in gaudier plumage after every fresh insolvency; and hunger begins to stare our once portly acquaintance in the face. At last he is completely 'sold up,' and if too old to go again into service, he will probably think himself well off to finish in the workhouse. And this is the career of two-thirds of those who leave comfortable homes for the vague future of a shadowy independence, and embark upon speculations of which they neither understand the nature nor count the cost.

But we must return to Gingham, bending her thin worn figure over some dirty needle-work, and rocking with her foot a wooden cradle, in which, covered by a scanty rug not over clean, sleeps a little pinched-up atom of a child, contrasting sadly with those vigorous brawling urchins out of doors. There is a scanty morsel of fire in the grate, though the day is hot and sultry, for a 'bit of dinner' has to be kept warm for 'father'; and very meagre fare it is, between its two delf plates. A thin-bladed knife and two-pronged fork lie ready for him on the rough deal table, guiltless of a cloth, and Gingham wonders what is keeping him, for he promised faithfully to come back to dinner, and the poor woman sighs as she stitches and rocks the child, and counts the quarters tolled out by

the neighbouring clock, and ponders sadly on old times, than which there is no surer sign of a heart ill at ease. Well-to-do, thriving people are continually looking forward, and scheming and living in the Future; it is only your worn, dejected, hopeless sufferer that recalls the long-faded sunshine of the Past.

Gingham's marriage took place at St. Swithin's as soon after Mrs. Kettering's death as appearances would allow, and was conducted with the usual solemnities observed on such occasions in her rank of life. There was a new shawl, and a gorgeous bonnet, and a cake, with a large consumption of tea, not to mention exciseable commodities. Tom Blacke looked very smart in a white hat and trowsers to match, whilst 'Hairblower' signalised the event by the performance of an intricate and unparalleled hornpipe, such as is never seen now-a-days off the stage. Blanche made the bride a handsome present, which was acknowledged with many blessings and a shower of tears. Gingham's great difficulty was, how ever she should part with Miss Blanche! and 'all went merry as a marriage bell.' But they had not long been man and wife ere Tom began to show the cloven foot. First he would take his blushing bride to tea-gardens and such places of convivial resort, where, whilst she partook of the 'cup that cheers but not inebriates,' he would sip consolatory measures of that which does both. After a time he preferred such expeditions as

she could not well accompany him on, and would come home with glazed eyes, a pale face, and the tie of his neckcloth under his ear. The truth will out. Tom was a drunken dog. There was no question about it. Then came dismissal from his employer, the attorney. Still, as long as Gingham's money lasted, all went on comparatively well. But a lady's-maid's savings are not inexhaustible, and people who live on their capital are apt to get through it wonderfully fast. So they came down from three well-furnished rooms to a kitchen and parlour, and from that to one miserable apartment, serving all purposes at once. Then they moved to London to look for employment; and Tom Blacke, a handy fellow enough when sober, obtained a series of situations, all of which he lost owing to his convivial failing. Now they paid two shillings a week for the wretched room in which we find them, and a hard matter it often was to raise money for the rent, and their own living, and Tom's score at 'The Feathers' just round the corner. But Gingham worked for the whole family as a woman will when put to it, and seemed to love her husband the better the worse he used her, as is constantly the case with that long-suffering sex. 'Poor fellow,' she would say, when Tom reeled home to swear at her in drunken ferocity, or kiss her in maudlin kindness, 'it's trouble that's drove him to it; but there's good in Tom yet, look how fond he is of baby.' And with all his faults, there is no doubt little Miss Blacke

possessed a considerable share of her father's heart, such as it was.

But even gentle woman's temper is not proof against being kept waiting, that most irritating of all trials; and Gingham, who in her more prosperous days had been a lady of considerable asperity, could 'pluck up a spirit,' as she called it, even now, when she was '*raised*,'—so, surmounting the coffee-coloured front with a dingy bonnet, and folding her bare arms in a faded shawl, she locked baby in, trusting devoutly the child might not wake during her absence, and marched stoutly off to 'The Feathers,' where she was safe to find her good-for-nothing husband.

There he was, sure enough, just as she expected, his old black coat glazed and torn, his pinched-up hat pressed down over his pale sunken features, his whole appearance dirty and emaciated. None but his wife could have recognised the dapper Tom Blacke, of St. Swithin's, in that shaky, scowling, dissipated sot. Alas! she knew him in his present character too well. There he was, playing skittles with a ponderous ruffian, in a linen jacket and high-lows, who looked like the showman of a travelling menagerie, only not so respectable, and a little Jew pedlar, with a hawk-eye and an expression of countenance that defied Mephistophiles himself to overreach him. There was her husband, betting pots of beer and 'goes' of gin, though the cupboard was bare at home and the child crying for food,—marking his

game with a trembling hand, cheating when he won, and blaspheming when he lost, like the very blackguard to which he was rapidly descending.

Gingham shook a little as she advanced, twirling the door-key nervously round her finger; but she determined to try the *suaviter in modo* first, so she began: 'Tom! Tom Blacke! dinner's ready, ain't you coming home?'

'Home!—Home be ——! and you, too, Mrs. Blacke; we wont go home till mornin, shall us, Mr. Fibbs?' Mr. Fibbs, although appearances were much against him, in his linen jacket and high-lows, was a man of politeness where the fair were concerned, so he took a straw out of his mouth, and replied: 'Not to cross the missus, when sich is by no means necessary; finish the game first, and then we'll hargue the pint,—that's what *I* say.'

'Oh, Tom, *pray* come away,' said poor Gingham, who had caught sight of the chalked-up score, and knew, by sad experience, what havoc it would make with the weekly earnings. 'I durstn't leave the child not a minute longer; I've kept your bit of dinner all hot for you,—come away, there's a dear!'

'Not I,' said Tom, poising his wooden bowl, for a fresh effort, and, irritated by his failure, bursting forth upon his wife. 'How *can* I leave these gentlemen in their game to attend to you; come, let's have no nonsense, be off! *be off!*' he repeated, clenching his fist, and raising his voice to a pitch that called

forth from the large man the admonitory remark that '*easy does it*,' whilst the little Jew's eye glittered at the prospect of winning his game.

But Gingham was roused, and she went at him fiercely and at once: 'Shame—shame on ye!' she exclaimed, in a low hoarse voice, gradually rising, as she got more excited, and her pale features worked with passion, 'with the child cryin' at home, and me obliged to come and look for you in such a place as this; me that slaves and toils, and works my fingers to the bone,' holding up her needle-scarred hands to the bystanders, who were already collecting, as they always do when there is a prospect of *a row*. 'Call yourself a man—*a man*, indeed!—and let your wife and child starve whilst you are taking your diversion, and enjoying of yourself here?' And you too,' she added, attacking the large man and the Jew with a suddenness which much startled the former, '*you* ought to be ashamed of yourselves, you ought; keeping of him here, and making of him as bad as yourselves—though perhaps *you're* not husbands and fathers, and don't know no better. Ay, do, you coward! strike a woman if you dare! Was it for this I left my place and my missus? Oh dear, oh dear, whatever shall I do?' and Gingham, throwing her apron over her head, sank upon a bench in a passion of weeping, supported by a phalanx of matrons who had already collected, and who took part in the alter-

cation, as being to all intents and purposes a government question.

Tom Blacke was furious, of course. Had it not been for the large man, he would have struck his wife to the ground—alas, not the first time, we fear, that she had felt the weight of a coward's arm—but that ponderous champion interposed his massive person, and recommended his friend strongly 'not to cross the missus.' Truth to tell, Mr. Fibbs had a little shrew of a black-eyed wife at home, who ruled the roast, and kept her great husband in entire subjection; besides which, like most square powerful men, he was a good-natured fellow, though not very respectable; and having won as much beer as he wanted from Tom, willingly lent his good offices to solder up the quarrel, which ended, as such disturbances generally do, in a sort of half-sulky reconciliation, and the wife marching off in triumph with her captured husband. The women, as usual, had formed the majority of the crowd, and of course sided with the injured lady; so Tom Blacke, after a few ineffectual threats, and an oath or two, left the ground with his still sobbing wife, promising himself an ample revenge if she should dare to cross him at home, when there was no one by to take her part.

When they arrived at the desolate room which served them for home, 'baby' was awake, and crying piteously to find its little self alone. On what trifles

do the moods and tempers of the human mind depend! The child set up a crow of delight to see its father, instead of the hideous howl in which it had been indulging, and stretched out its little arms with a welcome that went straight to the drunkard's heart. In another moment, he was dancing the little thing up and down in perfect good-humour; and poor Gingham, thoroughly overcome, was leaning her head against his shoulder in a paroxysm of reconciled affection, and going through that process of relief known to ladies by the expressive term of 'having a good cry.'

How many a matrimonial bicker has been interrupted and ended by the innocent smile of 'one of these little ones!' How many an ill-assorted couple have been kept from separation by the homely consideration of 'what should be done with the children!' How many an evil desire, how many an unkind thought, has been quenched at its very birth by the pure, open gaze of a guileless child! The stern, severe man, disgusted with the world, and disappointed in his best affections, has a corner in his heart for those whom he prizes as his own flesh and blood; the passionate, impetuous woman, yearning for the love she seeks in vain at home, her mind filled with an image of which it is sin even to think, and beset by the hundred temptations to which those are exposed who pass their lives in wedded misery, pauses on the very threshold, and is saved from guilt

when she thinks of her darlings. Sunshine and music do they make in a house, with their bright, happy faces, the patter of their little feet, and the ringing echoes of their merry laugh. Grudge not to have the quiver full of them. Love and prize them whilst you may; for the hour will come at last, and your life will be weary and your hearth desolate when they take wing and fly away.

So Tom Blacke and his wife are reconciled for the time, and would be comparatively happy, were it not for the grinding anxiety ever present to their minds of how to 'make both ends meet'—that consideration which poisons the comfort of many a homely dwelling, and which in their case is doubtless their own fault, or at least the fault of the *paterfamilias*, but none the less bitter on that account.

'There is the baker to pay, and the rent,' sighed Gingham, enumerating them on her fingers; 'and the butcher called this morning with his account; to be sure it is but little, and little there is to meet it with. I shall be paid to-day for the plain-work, and I got a bit of washing yesterday, that brought me in sevenpence halfpenny,' she proceeded, immersed in calculation; 'and then we shall be three-and-eightpence short — three-and-eightpence, and where to get it I don't know, if I was to drop down dead this minute!'

'I *must* have a little money to-day, too, missus,' said Tom, in a hoarse, dogged voice; 'can't ye put

the screw on a little tighter? A man may as well be starved to death as worritted to death; and I can't face 'The Feathers' again without wiping off a bit of the score, ye know.' Gingham's eye glanced at the Sunday gown, hanging on a nail behind the door—a black silk one, of voluminous folds and formidable rustle, the last remnant of respectability left, and she thought *that*, too, must follow the rest to the pawnbroker's—to that receptacle of usury with which, alas! she was too familiar, and from which even now, she possessed sundry mocking duplicates, representing many a once-prized article of clothing and furniture.

Tom saw and interpreted the hopeless glance: 'No, no,' said he, relenting, 'not quite so bad as that, neither; I wouldn't strip the gown off your back, Rachel, not if it was ever so; I couldn't bear to see you, that was once so respectable, going about all in rags. We *might* get on, too,' added he, brightening up, with an expression of desperate cunning in his bad eye—'we might get money—ay, plenty of it, if you were only like the rest; you're too mealy-mouthed, Mrs. Blacke, that's where it is.'

'O Tom, what would you have me do?' exclaimed his wife, bursting afresh into tears; 'we've been honest as yet through it all, and I've borne and borne, because we *were* honest. I'd work upon my bare knees for you and the child,—I'd starve and never complain *myself*, if I hadn't a

morsel in the cupboard, but I 'd keep my honesty, Tom, I'd keep my honesty, for when *that 's* gone, all's gone together.'

'Will your honesty put decent clothes on your back, missus?' rejoined Tom, who did not see that the article in question was by any means so indispensable; 'will your honesty put a joint down before the fire, such as we used to sit down to every day, when we was first man and wife, and lived respectable? Will your honesty furnish a belly-full for this poor little beggar, that 's whining now on my knee for a bit to eat?' Gingham began to relent at this consideration, and Tom pursued his advantage: 'Besides, it 's not as if it was to do anybody any harm; there 's Miss Blanche got more than she knows what to do with, and the young gentleman—he 's away at the wars. *Honesty,* indeed, if honesty's the game, you 've a right to your share, what Mrs. Kettering intended you should have. I think I ought to know the law, and the law 's on our side, and the justice, too. Ah! Rachel, you used not to be so difficult to come round once,' concluded Tom, trying the *tender* tack, when he had exhausted all his other arguments, and recalling to his wife's mind, as he intended it should do, their early days of courtship, and the carriage of a certain brown-paper parcel by the seashore.

But Gingham felt she had right on her side, and when we can indulge the spirit of contradiction

never dormant in our natures, and fight under the banner of truth at the same time, it is too great a luxury for mortal man, or especially mortal woman, to forego, so Gingham was game to the last. 'No, Tom, *no*!' she said, steadily and with emphasis, 'I *won't* do it, so don't ask me, and there's an end of it!'

Her husband put the child down in disgust, banged his hat upon his head, as if to go back to 'The Feathers,' and was leaving the room, when a fresh idea struck him. If he could but break down his wife's self-respect, he might afterwards mould her more easily to his purpose, and the course he proposed to adopt might, at any rate, furnish him in the meantime with a little money for his dissipation; so he turned round coaxingly to poor Gingham, and asked for his bit of dinner, and put the infant once more upon his knee, ere he began to sound her on the propriety of applying for a little assistance to her darling, Miss Blanche. 'You ought to go and see your young lady, Rachel,' said he, quite good-humouredly, and with the old keeping-company-days' 'smile;' 'it's only proper respect, now she's grown to be a great lady, and come to London. I'll mind the child at home; it likes to be left with its daddy —a deary,—and you brush yourself up a bit, and put on your Sunday gown there, and take a bit of a holiday; you needn't hurry back, you know, if they ask you to stay tea in the room, and I'll be here till

you come home, or if I'm not, I'll get one of the neighbours to look in. So now go, there's a good wench.'

Mrs. Blacke had not heard such endearing language since the sea-side walks at St. Swithin's,—she felt almost happy again, and nearly forgot the 'three-and-eightpence' wanting for the week's account. Sundry feminine misgivings had she, as to her personal appearance being sufficiently fine to face the new servants, in the exalted character of Miss Blanche's late lady's maid; but women, even ugly ones, have a wonderful knack of adorning themselves on very insufficient materials, and Tom assured her the black silk looked as good as new, and that bonnet always *did* become her, and always *would*—so she gave the child a parting kiss, and her husband many injunctions to take care of the treasure, and started in wonderfully good spirits. Tom's last injunction to her as she departed being to this effect:—'if Miss Blanche should ask you how we're getting on, Rachel, you put your pride in your pocket—mind that—put your pride in your pocket, do you understand!' So the drunkard was left alone with his child.

We have already said Tom was fond of the little thing—in fact, it was the only being on earth that had found its way to his heart. Man must love *something*, and Tom Blacke, the attorney's clerk, who had married for money as if he had been a ruined peer of the realm, cared just as little for his wife as any

impoverished nobleman might for the peeress with whom his income was necessarily encumbered; but the more indifferent he was to the mother, the fonder he was of the child; and with all his liking for skittles and vulgar dissipation (the whist and claret of higher circles), he thought it no hardship to spend the rest of the afternoon with an infant that was just beginning to talk. He fully intended, as he had promised, to remain at home till his wife returned, but a drunkard can have no will of his own. When a man gives himself up to strong drink he chooses a mistress who will take no denial, for whose appetite grows too fiercely by what it feeds on, whose beck and call he must be ever ready to obey, for she will punish his neglect by the infliction of such horrors as we may fancy pictured in the imagination of the doomed—till he fly for relief back to the enchantress that has maddened him, and whilst the poison begets thirst as the thirst craves for the poison, the liquid fire poured upon the smouldering flame eats, and saps, and scorches, till it expires in drivelling idiotcy, or blazes out in raving riotous madness. Mr. Blacke was tolerably cheerful up to a certain point, when he arrived at that state which we once heard graphically described by the serjeant of a barrack-guard, on whom the duty had devolved of placing an inebriated warrior in solitary confinement—'Was he drunk, serjeant?' said the orderly officer. 'No, sir.' 'Was he sober, then?' 'No, sir.' 'How? neither drunk

nor sober! what d'ye mean?' 'Well, sir, the man had been drinking, no doubt, *but the liquor was just dying out in him.*'

So with Tom Blacke—after an hour or so the liquor began *to die out in him*, and then came the ghastly reaction. First he thought the room was gloomy and solitary, and he got nearer the child's cradle for company—the little thing was again asleep, and he adjusted its coverlet more comfortably—ah! that slimy, crawling creature! what is it? so near the infant's head—he brushed it away with his hand—but swarms of the same loathsome insects came climbing over the cradle, chairs, and furniture. Now they settled on his legs and clothes, and he beat them down and flung them from him by hundreds, shuddering with horror the while; then he looked into the corners of the room, and put his hands before his eyes after each startled glance, for hideous faces grinned and gibbered at him, starting out from the very walls, and mopping and mowing, shifted their forms and places, so that it was impossible to identify them. He could have borne these, but worse still, there was a Shape in the room with him, of whose presence he was fearfully conscious, though whenever he manned himself to look steadily at it, it was gone. He could not bear to have this visitant *behind* him, so he backed his chair hard against the wall. In vain—still on the side from which he turned his head the grim Shape sat and cowered and blinked at him.

He knew it—he felt it—mortal nerves could bear it no longer. He grew desperate, as a man does in a dream. Should he take the child and run for it? No! he would meet It on the narrow stairs, and he could not get by there—Ha! the window! bounding into the air, child and all, he might escape. He was mad now—he was capable of anything. Come along, little one!—they are blocking up the room—they cover the room in myriads—the Shape is waving them on—light and freedom without, the devil and all his legions within—Hurrah!

Fortunate was it for the hope of the Blacke family that Mrs. Crimp was at this instant returning to her lodgings above, accompanied by several promising young Crimps, with whom, as she toiled up the common staircase, she kept up a running fire of objurgation and entreaty. The homely sounds, the familiar voices, brought Tom Blacke to himself. The vicinity of such a material dame as Mrs. Crimp was sufficient to destroy the ideal in the most brandy-sodden brain, and the horrors left their victim for the time. But he dared not remain to encounter a second attack. He could not answer for the consequences of another hour in that room alone with the child, so he asked his neighbour, a kind motherly woman, and as fond of a baby as if she had not nursed a dozen of her own, to keep an eye upon his little one, and betook himself straight to 'The Feathers,' to raise the accursed remedy to his lips

with a trembling hand, and borrow half-an-hour's callousness at a frightful sacrifice. Tom thought he knew what was good for his complaint, and 'clung to the hand that smote him' with the confirmed infatuation of a sot. So we leave him at the bar, with a glazed eye, a haggard smile, and the worm that never dies eating into his very vitals.

In the meantime Gingham, with the dingy bonnet somewhat cocked up behind, and her bony fingers peeping through the worn thread gloves, is making her way along the sunny pavement in the direction of Grosvenor Square. The old black silk gown looks worse than she expected in that searching light, and she feels nervous and shy at revisiting her former haunts; nor does she like leaving home for many hours at a time. But as she walks on, the exercise does her good. The moving objects on all sides, and the gaudy bustle of London in the height of the season have an exhilarating effect on her spirits. It is so seldom she has *an outing*, moped up for days together in that mews, the very change is enjoyment; and the shops, with their cheap dresses and seductive ribbons, are perfect palaces of delight. She cannot tear herself from one window, where an excellent silk for her own wear, and a frock 'fit to dress an angel,' as she thinks, for baby, are to be sold, in tempting juxtaposition, respectively for a mere nothing. If she was sure the colour of the silk would *stand*, she would try and scrape the money together

to buy it; but a pang shoots through her as she recalls the fatal 'three-and-eightpence,' so she walks on with a heavy sigh, and though she knows she never can possess it, yet she feels all the better for having seen such a dress as *that*.

And these, and such as these, are the pleasures of the poor in our great metropolis. Continual self-denial, continual self-restraint, continual self-abasement—like Tantalus, to be whelmed in the waters of enjoyment which must never touch the lip. In the country the poor man can at least revel in its freshest and purest delights. We have been told that 'the meek shall inherit the earth,' and the day-labourer, mending 'my lord's' park fence, has often far more enjoyment in that wilderness of beauty than its high-born proprietor. While the latter is in bed, the former breathes the sweet morning air and the scent of a thousand wild-flowers, whose fragrance will be scorched up ere noon. The glad song of birds makes music to his ear—the whole landscape, smiling in the sunlight, is spread out for the delight of his eye. Not only the park, and the waving woods, and the placid lake, are his property for the time, but the cheerful homesteads, and the scattered herds, and the hazy distance stretching away as far as those blue hills that melt into the sky. He can admire the shadows of each giant elm without disturbing himself as to which of them must be marked for the axe; he can watch the bounding deer without caring which is

the fattest to furnish a haunch for solemn dinners and political entertainments, where people eat because they are weary, and drink because they are dull. The distant view he looks upon is to him a breathing, sparkling world, full of light, and life, and hope—not a mere county sub-divided into votes and freeholds, and support and interest. His frame is attempered by toil to the enjoyment of natural pleasures and natural beauties. The wild breeze fans his brow—the daisies spring beneath his feet—the glorious summer sky is spread above, and the presence of his Maker pervades the atmosphere about him. For the time the man is happy—happier, perhaps, than he is himself aware of. To be sure he is mortal, and in the midst of all he sighs for beer; yet is his lot one not unmixed with many pure and thrilling pleasures, and if he can only get plenty of work, there are many states of existence far worse than that of an English field-labourer.

Not so with the sons of toil in town—there all enjoyment is artificial, all pleasure must be paid for—the air they breathe will support life, but its odours are far different from those of the wild-flower. If their eyes are ever gladdened by beauty, it is but the pomp and splendour of their fellow-creatures on which they gaze with sneering admiration, half envy, half contempt. If their ears are ever ravished by music, there is a tempting demon wafting sin into their hearts upon the sounds—there is a mocking

voice of ribaldry and vulgar revelry accompanying the very concord of heaven. What pleasures *can* they have but those of the senses? Where have they to go for relaxation but to the gin-shop? What inducement have they to raise themselves above the level of 'the beasts which perish?'

Honour to those who are working to provide intellectual amusements for the masses, and that education of the soul which places man *above* the circumstances by which he is surrounded! Much has been done, and much is still left to do. Those waves must be taught to leap ever upwards, to fling their separate crests towards the sky, for if the tempest should arise, and they should come surging on in one gigantic volume, they will make a clear breach wherever the embankment happens to be weakest; and who shall withstand their force?

Can we wonder to find the lower classes sometimes discontented when we think of their privations and their toils? Shall a man starve with but half-an-inch of plate-glass betwixt his dry white lips, and the reeking abundance of luxurious gluttony? and shall he turn away without a murmur, die, and make no sign? Shall a fellow-creature drag on an existence of perpetual labour, with no pleasures, no relaxations, almost no repose, and shall we expect this dreary, blighted being to be always contented, always cheerful, always respectful to his superiors? Is it to be all one way here below? shall it be all joy, and

mirth, and comfort, and superfluity with the one, and all want, and misery, and grim despair with the other? Forbid it, Heaven! Let us, every man, put his shoulder to the wheel—let each, in his own circle, be it small or great, do all in his power for those beneath him—beneath him but in the accident of station, brothers in all besides—live and let live—stretch a helping hand to all who need it—treat every man as one who has an immortal soul—and though 'they shall never cease out of the land,' yet will their wants be known and their hardships alleviated, and the fairest spirit of heaven—angelic Charity—shall spread her wings widest and warmest in London for the poor.

CHAPTER X.

Superfluity.

LONDON FOR THE RICH—A GOLDEN IMAGE—THE LADY OF FASHION—LIFE WELL SPENT—BOOK-WRITING AND BOOK-MAKING—THE DAY OF THE DRAWING-ROOM—GOING TO MY CLUB—THE AWFUL MOMENT—GOD SAVE THE QUEEN.

LONDON for the rich, though, is a different thing altogether. 'Money cannot purchase happiness,' said the philosopher. 'No,' replied a celebrated wit, himself well-skilled in circulating the much-esteemed dross, 'but it can purchase a very good imitation of it,' and none can gainsay the truth of his distinction. What can it do for us in the great Babylon? It can buy us airy houses—cool rooms—fragrant flowers—the best of everything to eat and drink—carriages—horses—excitement—music—friends—everything but a good appetite and content. London for the rich man is indeed a Palace of Delights. See him at the window of his club, in faultless attire, surrounded by worshippers who perform their part of the mutual contract most religiously, by finding conversation and company, both of the pleasantest, for him who provides drag and dinner, equally of the

best. Though they bow before a calf, is it not a golden one? though they 'eat dirt,' is it not dressed by a French cook? See him cantering in the Park,—an animal so well broke as that would make John Gilpin himself appear a fine horseman,—what envious glances follow him from the humble pedestrian,—what sunny smiles shine on him from lips and eyes surmounting the most graceful shapes, the most becoming neck-ribbons! No, admiring stranger! You are not in the Bazaar at Constantinople,—you are amidst England's high-born beauties in the most moral country on earth; yet even here, with sorrow be it said, there is many a fair girl ready to barter love, and hope, and self-respect, for a box at the opera and an *adequate* settlement, only it must be large enough. Within fifty yards of this spot may Tattersall's voice be heard any Monday or Thursday proclaiming, hammer in hand, his mercenary ultimatum, 'The best blood in England, and she is to be sold.' Brain-sick moralists would read a lesson from the animal's fate. Our men-of-the-world are satisfied to take things as they are. Meanwhile the Calf has shown himself long enough to his idolaters; he dines *early* to-day—a quarter-past eight—therefore he canters home to dress. Man has no right to insult such a cook as his by being hungry, so he trifles over a repast that Apicius would have envied, and borrows half an hour's fictitious spirits from a golden vintage, that has well nigh cost its weight in gold. What an

evening is before him! All that can enchant the eye, all that can ravish the ear—beauties of earth and sounds of heaven,—the very revelry of the intellect, and 'the best box in the house' from which to see, hear, and enjoy. The Calf is indeed pasturing in the Elysian fields, and we need follow him no longer. Can he be otherwise than happy? Can there be lips on which such fruits as these turn to ashes? Are beauty, and luxury, and society, and song, nothing after all but 'a bore'? Nature is a more impartial mother than we are prone to believe, and the rich man need not always be such an object of envy only because he *is* rich.

But pretty Blanche Kettering enjoyed the glitter and the excitement, and the pleasures of her London life, even as the opening flower enjoys the sunshine and the breeze. It requires a season or two to take the edge off a fresh healthy appetite, and *ennui* scowls in vain upon the *very* young. Gingham thought her young lady had never looked so well as she did to-day of all days in the year, the one on which Blanche was to *be presented.* Yes—it was the day of the drawing-room, and our former Abigail forgot the supercilious manners of the new porter, and the high-and-mighty ways of the general's gentleman, and even her own faded black silk, in a paroxysm of motherly affection and professional enthusiasm, brought on by the beauty of her darling, and the surpassing magnificence of her costume.

Blanche was nearly dressed when she arrived, standing like a little princess amongst her many attendants —this one smoothing a fold, that one adjusting a curl, and a third holding the pincushion aloft, having transferred the greater portion of its contents to her own mouth.

Would that we had power to describe the young lady's dress—would that we could delight bright eyes, should bright eyes condescend to glance upon our page, with a critical and correct account of the materials and the fashion that were capable of constituting so attractive a *tout ensemble*—how the gown was brocade, and the train was silk, and the trimmings were gossamer to the best of our belief!—how pearls were braided in that soft brown hair, and feathers nodded over that graceful little head, though to our mind it would have been even better without these accessories,—and how the dear girl looked altogether like a fairy-queen, smiling through a wreath of mist, and glittering with the dew-drops of the morning.

'Lor', Miss, you do look splendid!' said Gingham, lost in admiration, partly at the richness of the materials, partly at the improvement in her old charge. Blanche was a very pretty girl, certainly, even in a court-dress, trying as is that costume to all save the dark, tall beauties, who do indeed look magnificent in trains and feathers; but then the Anglo-Saxon *blonde* has her revenge next morning in her

simple *déshabille* at breakfast, a period at which the black-eyed sultana is apt to betray a slight yellowness of skin, and a drowsy listless air, not above half awake. Well, they are all very charming in all dresses—it 's lucky they are so unconscious of their own attractions.

Blanche was anything but a vain girl; but of course it takes a long time to dress for a drawing-room, and when mirrors are properly arranged for self-inspection, it requires a good many glances to satisfy ladies as to the correct disposition of 'front, flanks, and rear;' so several minutes elapse ere Gingham can be favoured with a private interview, and she passes that period in admiring her young lady, and scanning, with a criticism that borders on disapprobation, the ministering efforts of Rosine, the French maid.

A few weeks of London dissipation have not yet taken the first fresh bloom off Blanche's young brow, there is not a single line to herald the 'battered look' that will, too surely, follow a very few years of late hours and nightly excitement and disappointments. The girl is all *girl* still—bright, and simple, and lovely. With all our prejudices in her favour, and our awe-struck admiration of her dress, we cannot help thinking she would look yet lovelier in a plain morning gown, with no ornament but a rose or two and that Mary Delaval's stately beauty and commanding figure would be more in character with those splendid robes of state. But Mary is only a governess,

and Blanche is an heiress; so the one remains upstairs and the other goes to court. What else would you have?

It is difficult for an inferior at any time to obtain an interview with a superior, and nowhere more so than in London. Gingham was secure of Blanche's sympathy as of her assistance, but although the latter was forthcoming, the very instant there was the slightest hesitation perceived in her answer to the natural question, 'how are you getting on?' Gingham was deprived of her share of the former by a thundering double-knock, that shook even the massive house in Grosvenor-square to its foundation, and the announcement that Lady Mount Helicon had arrived, and was even then waiting in the carriage for Miss Kettering.

'Good bye, good bye, Gingham,' said Blanche, hurrying off in a state of nervous trepidation, she scarcely knew why; 'I mustn't keep Lady Mount Helicon waiting, and of course she won't get out in her train—come again soon, good bye;' and in another moment the steps were up, the door closed with a bang, and Blanche, spread well out so as not to get 'creased' by the side of stately Lady Mount Helicon, in a magnificent family coach, rich in state-liveried coachman, and Patagonian footmen, to which Cinderella's equipage in the fairy tale was a mere costermonger's cart.

As the stout official on the box hammer-cloth,

whose driving, concealed as he is behind an enormous nosegay, is the admiration of all beholders, will take some little time to reach the 'string,' and when placed in that lingering procession, will move at a snail's pace the whole way to St. James', we may as well fill up the interval by introducing to the reader a lady with whom Blanche is rapidly becoming intimate, and who takes a warm, shall we say a *maternal* interest, in the movements of our young heiress.

Lady Mount Helicon, then, is one of those characters which the metropolis of this great and happy country can alone bring to perfection. That she was once a merry, single-hearted child, is more than probable, but so many years have elapsed since that innocent period—so many 'seasons,' with their ever-recurring duties of card-leaving, dinner-receiving, ball-haunting, and keeping up her acquaintance, have been softening her brain and hardening her heart, that there is little left of the child in her world-worn nature, and not a great deal of the woman, save her attachment to her son. She is as fond of him as it is possible for her to be of anything. She is proud of his talents, his appearance, his acquirements, and in her heart of hearts of his wildness. Altogether, she thinks him a great improvement on the old lord, and would sacrifice anything for him in the world, save her position in society. That position, such as it is, she has all her life been struggling to retain. She would improve it if she could, but she

will never get any farther. She belongs to the mass of good society, and receives cards for all the 'best places' and most magnificent entertainments; but is as far removed as a curate's wife in Cornwall from the inner circle of those 'bright particular stars' with whom she would give her coronet to associate.

Lady Long-Acre *bows* to her, but she never *nods*. Lady Dinadam invites her to the great ball, which that exemplary peeress annually endures with the constancy of a martyr; but as for the little dinners, for which her gastronomic lord is so justly renowned, it is needless to think of them. She might just as well expect to be asked to Wassailworth. And although the Duke is hand-and-glove with her son, she well knows she has as much chance of visiting the Emperor of Morocco. Even tiny Mrs. Dreadnought alternately snubs and patronises her. Why that artificial woman, who has no rank and very little character, should be one of 'the great people' is totally inexplicable; however, there she *is*, and Lady Mount Helicon looks up to her accordingly. Well, there are gradations in all ranks, even to the very steps before the throne. In her ladyship's immediate circle are the Ormolus, and the Veneers, and the Blacklambs, with whom she is on terms of the most perfect equality; while below her again are the Duffles, and the Marchpanes, and the Featherheads, and a whole host of inferiors. If Lady Long-Acre is dis-

tant with *her*, can she not be condescending in her turn to Lady Tadpole? If Dinadam, who uses somewhat coarse language for a nobleman, says he 'can't stand that *something* vulgar woman,' cannot Lady Mount Helicon cut young Deadlock unblushingly in the street, and turn the very coldest part of her broad shoulder on Sir Timothy and Lady Turnstile? 'City people, my dear,' as she explains for the edification of Blanche, who is somewhat aghast at the uncourteous manuœvre. Has she not a grand object to pursue for eighteen hours out of every twenty-four? Must she not keep alive the recollections of her existence in the memories of some two or three hundred people, who would not care a straw if she were dead and buried before to-morrow morning? Is it not a noble ambition to arrive at terms of apparent intimacy with this shaky grandee, or that superannuated duchess, because they *are* duchesses and grandees? Can horses and carriages be better employed than in carrying cards about for judicious distribution? Is not that a delightful night of which two-thirds are spent blocked up in 'the string,' and the remainder suffocated on the staircase? In short, can money be better lavished, or time and energy better applied, than in 'keeping up one's acquaintance?'

This is the noble aim of 'all the world.' This it is which brings country families to London when their strawberries are ripe, and their roses in full

bloom. The Hall looks beautiful when its old trees are in foliage, and its sunny meadows rippled with the fresh-mown hay. But, dear! who would be out of London in June? except, of course, during Ascot week. No, the gardener and the steward are left to enjoy one of the sweetest places in England, and the family hug themselves in the exchange of their roomy chambers, and old oak wainscoting, and fresh country air, for a small, close, ill-constructed house, redolent of those mysterious perfumes which are attributed to 'drains,' and grimy with many a year's accumulation of soot and other impurities, but happy, thrice happy in its *situation*—not a quarter of a mile from St. James's-street, and within a stone's throw of Berkeley-square! Year after year the Exodus goes on. Year after year has the 'Squire sworn stoutly he will enjoy *this* summer at home, and perjured himself, as a man invariably does when he attests by oath an opinion in defiance of his wife. While there are daughters to marry off, and sons to get commissions for, we can account in a measure for the migratory movement, though based, we conceive, on fallacious principles. But when John has got his appointment, through the *county* member after all, and Lucy has married the young rector of the adjoining parish, who fell in love with her at the *county* archery meeting, why the two poor old folks should make their annual struggle, and endure their annual discomfort, is only to be explained by the tenacity with which English people

cling to their national superstitions and their national absurdities.

Even little Blanche, living in one of the best houses in Grosvenor-square, and going to Court under a peeress's 'wing,' sighed while she thought of Newton-Hollows and its shrubberies, and her garden just blooming into summer luxuriance. As they toiled slowly down St. James'-street, envying the privileged grandees with the *entrée* through St. James'-park, our pretty heiress would fain have been back, in her garden-bonnet, tying up her roses, and watching her carnations, and idling about in the deep shades of her leafy paradise. Not so the chaperon. She was full of the important occasion. It was her pleasure to *present* Miss Kettering, and her business to arrange how that maidenly patronymic should be merged in the title of Mount Helicon: for this she was herself prepared to lapse into a *dowager*—who but a mother would be capable of such a sacrifice? Yet it must be; none knew better than her ladyship, excepting, perhaps, the late lord's man-of-business, and certain citizens of the Hebrew persuasion, collectors of noblemen's and gentlemen's autographs—how impossible it was for 'Mount' to go on much longer. His book on the Derby was a far deeper affair than his 'Broadsides from the Baltic'—where the publisher lost shillings on the latter, the author paid away hundreds on the former—and the literary sportsman confessed, with his usual devil-may-care

candour, that 'between black-legs and blue-stockings he was pretty nearly told-out!'—therefore must an heiress be supplied from *the canaille* to prop the noble house of Mount Helicon—therefore have the Mount Helicon arms, and the Mount Helicon liveries, and the Mount Helicon carriage been seen day after day waiting in Grosvenor-square—therefore does their diplomatic proprietress speak in all societies of '*her* charming Miss Kettering,' and '*her* sweet Blanche,' and therefore are they even now arriving in company at St. James's, followed by the General in his brougham, who has come to pay his respects to his sovereign in *the tightest* uniform that ever threatened an apoplectic warrior with convulsions. 'My dear, you look exquisite,' says the chaperon, 'only mind how you get out, and don't dirty your train,—and recollect your feathers; when you curtsey to the Queen, whatever you do don't let them bob in her Majesty's face.' Blanche, albeit somewhat frightened, could not help laughing, and looked so fresh and radiant as she alighted, that the very mob, assembled for purposes of criticism, scarcely forbore from telling her as much to her face.' 'Don't be nervous, my dear,' and '*pray* don't let us get separated,' said the two ladies simultaneously, as they entered the palace, and Blanche felt her knees tremble and her heart beat as she followed her conductress up the stately well-lined staircase, between rows of magnificent-looking gentlemen-officials, all in full dress. The kettle-drums

of the Life Guards booming from without did not serve to reassure her half so much as the jolly faces of the beef-eaters, every one of whom seems to be cut out to exactly the same pattern, and, inexplicable as it may appear, is a living impersonation of Henry VIII.; but she took courage after a time, seeing that nobody was the least frightened except herself, and that young Brosier of the Guards, one of her dancing-partners, and to-day on duty at St. James's, was swaggering about as much at home as if he had been brought up in the palace instead of his father's humble-looking parsonage. Blanche would have liked it better, though, had the staircase and corridor been a little more crowded; as it was, she felt too conspicuous, and fancied people looked at her as if they knew she was clutching those two tickets with her name and her chaperon's legibly inscribed thereon, for the information of an exalted office-bearer, because this was her first appearance at Court, and she was going *to be presented!* Innocent Blanche! The gentlemen in uniform are busy with their collars (the collar of a uniform is positive strangulation for everything but a *bonâ fide* soldier), whilst those in civil vestures are absorbed in the contemplation of their own legs, which, in the unusual attire of silk stockings and 'shorts,' look worse to the owner than to any one else, and that is saying a good deal. The General is close behind his niece, and struts with an ardour which yesterday's levee in that same

tight coat has been unable to cool. The plot thickens, and they add their tickets to a table already covered by cards inscribed with the names of England's noblest and fairest, for the information of the Grand Vizier, and—shall we confess it?—the gentlemen of the press! Lady Mount Helicon bows right and left with stately courtesy; Blanche seizes a moment to arrange her train and a stray curl unobserved; and the General, between gold-lace and excitement, breaks out into an obvious perspiration. Blanche's partners gather round her as they would at a ball, though she scarcely recognises some in their military disguises. And those who have not been introduced, whisper to each other, '*That's* Miss Kettering,' and depreciate her, and call her 'very pretty *for an heiress.*' Captain Lacquers is magnificent; he has exchanged into 'the Loyal Hussars,' chiefly on account of the uniform, and thinks that in 'hessians' and a 'pelisse' he ought not to *be bought* under half a million. He breakfasted with 'Uppy' this morning, and rallied that suitor playfully on his advantage in attending the Drawing-room, whereas Sir Ascot was to be on duty, and is even now lost in jack-boots and a helmet, on a pawing black charger, outside. D'Orville is there too, with his stately figure, and grave, handsome face. His hussar uniform sits none the worse for those two medals on his breast; and his beauty is none the less commanding for a tinge of brown caught from an Indian sun. He is listening

to tho General, and bending his winning eyes on Blanche. The girl thinks he is certainly the *nicest* person *here*. By a singular association of ideas, the whole thing reminds the General of the cavalry action at Gorewallah, and his energetic reminiscences of that brilliant affair are by no means lost on the by-standers.

'Blanche, my dear, there's Sir Roger Rearsby—most distinguished officer.—What?—I was his brigade-major at Chutney, and we—D'Orville, *you* know that man—how d'ye mean?—Why, it's Colonel Chuffins. I pulled him from under his horse in the famous charge of the Kedgerees, and stood across him for two hours—*two hours*, by the god of war!—till I'd rallied the Kedgerees, and we swept everything before us. I suppose you'll allow, Gorewallah was the best thing of the war. Zounds! I don't believe the sepoys have done talking of it yet! Look ye here: Mash Mofussil occupied the heights, and Bahawdar Bang was detached to make a demonstration in our rear. Well, sir—'

At this critical juncture, and ere the General had time to explain the strategy by which Bahawdar Bang's manœuvre was defeated, he and his party had been swept onward with the tide to where a doorway stemmed the crowd into a mass of struggling confusion. Lappets and feathers waved to and fro like a grove of poplars in a breeze; fans were broken, and soft cheeks scratched against epaulettes and such

accoutrements of war; here and there a pair of moustaches towered above the surface, like the yards of some tall bark in a storm; whilst ever and anon a heavy dowager, like some plunging seventy-four that answers not her helm, came surging through the mass, with the sheer force of that specific gravity which is not to be denied. As the state-rooms are reached, the crowd becomes more dense and the heat insufferable. A red cord, stretched tightly the whole length of the room, offers an insuperable barrier to the impetuous, and compels the panting company to defile in due order of precedence—'first come first served,' being here as elsewhere the prevailing maxim. And now, people being obliged to stand still, make the best of it, and begin to talk, their remarks being as original and interesting as those of a well-dressed crowd usually are.—'Wawt a crush—aw—' says Captain Lacquers, skilfully warding off from Blanche the whole person of a stout naval officer, and sighing to think of the tarnish his beloved hessians have sustained by being trodden on—'there's Lady Crane and the Miss Cranes—that's Rebacca, the youngest, she's going to be presented, poor girl! aw, she's painfully ugly, Miss Kettering—aw—makes me ill to look at her.' Poor Rebecca, she's not pretty, at least in a court dress, and is dreadfully frightened besides. She knows the rich Miss Kettering by sight, and admires her honestly, and envies her too, and would give anything to change places with her

now, for she has a slight *tendresse* for good-looking, unmeaning Lacquers. Take comfort, Rebecca, you will hardly condescend to speak to him, when you go through the same dread ordeal next year, in this very place, as Marchioness 'Ermindale. The Marquis is looking out for a young wife, and has seen you already, walking early, in shabby gloves, with your governess, and has made up his mind, and will marry you out of hand before the end of the season. So you will be the richest peeress in England, and have a good-looking, good-humoured, honest-hearted husband, very little over forty, and you will do pretty much what you like, and never go with your back to the horses any more, only you don't know it, nor has it anything to do with our story, except to prove that the lottery is not, invariably, 'all blanks and no prizes,'—that a quiet, unassuming, lady-like girl has fully as good a chance of winning the game as any of your fashionable beauties—your dashing young ladies, with their pictures in print-books, and their names in the clubs, and their engagements a dozen deep, and their heart-broken lovers in scores—men who can well afford to be *lovers*, seeing that their resources will not admit of their becoming husbands. Such a suitor is Captain Lacquers to the generality of his ladye-loves, though he means honestly enough as regards Blanche, and would like to marry her and her three per-cents. to-morrow. Misguided dandy! what chance has he against such a rival as D'Orville? Even if there were

no Frank Hardingstone, and Cousin Charlie were never to come back, he is but on a par with Sir Ascot, Lord Mount Helicon, and a hundred others—there is not a toss of a halfpenny for choice between them. Nevertheless, he has great confidence in his own fascinations, and not being troubled with diffidence, is only waiting for an opportunity to lay himself, his uniform, and his debts, at the heiress's feet.

The Major, meanwhile, whom Lady Mount Helicon thinks 'charming,' and of whom she is persuaded *she* has made a conquest, pioneers a way for Blanche and her chaperon through the glittering throng. 'It *is* very formidable, Miss Kettering,' says he, pitying the obvious nervousness of the young girl, 'but it 's soon over, like a visit to the dentist. You know what to do, and the Queen is so kind and so gracious, it 's not half so alarming when you are really before her; now, go on; that 's the grand vizier, keep close to Lady Mount Helicon, and mind, don't turn your back to any of the royalties. I shall be in the gallery, to get your carriage after it 's over. I shall be so anxious to know how you get through it.'

'Thank you, Major D'Orville,' replied poor Blanche, with an upward glance of gratitude that made her violet eyes look deeper and lovelier than ever; and she sailed on, with a very respectable assumption of fortitude, but inwardly wishing that she could sink into the earth, or, at least, remain with kind, protecting Major D'Orville and Uncle Baldwin, and

those gentlemen whose duty did not bring them into the immediate presence of their sovereign.

These worthies, having nothing better to do, began to beguile the time by admiring each other's uniforms, criticising the appearance of the company, and such vague impertinencies as go by the name of general conversation. Lacquers, who had just caught the turn of his hessians at a favourable point of view, was more than usually communicative. 'Heard of Bolter?' says he, addressing the public in general, and amongst others a first cousin of that injured man. 'Taken his wife back again—aw—soft, I should say—fact is, she and Fopples couldn't get on; Frank kicked at the poodle directly he got to the railway station; he swore he would only take the parrot, and they quarrelled there. I don't believe they went abroad at all, at least not together. Seen the poodle? Nice dog; they 've got him in Green-street, very like Frank, believe he was jealous of him!' A general laugh greeted the hussar's witticism, and the cousin being, as usual, not on the best of terms with his relation, enjoyed the joke more than any one else. Major D'Orville alone has neither listened to the story nor caught the point. Blanche's pleading, grateful eyes haunt him still. He feels that the more he likes her the less he would wish to marry her. 'She is worthy of a better fate,' he thinks, 'than to be linked to a broken-down *roué*.' And as is often the case, the charm of beauty in another brings forcibly to his

mind the only face he ever really loved; and the Major sighs as he wishes he could begin life again, on totally different principles from those he has all along adopted. Well, it is too late now. The game must be played out, and he proceeds to cement his alliance with the General by asking him to lunch with him at his club 'after this thing's over.'

'We 'll all go together,' exclaimed Lacquers, who had been meditating the very same move against his prospective uncle-in-law, only he couldn't hit the right pronunciation of a *déjeuner à la fourchette,* the term in which he was anxious to couch his invitation.

'Not a member, sir,' says the General, with a well-pleased smile at the invitation; 'cross-questioned by the waiter, kicked out by the committee—what? only belong to 'The Chelsea and Noodles'—don't approve of clubs in the abstract—all very well whilst one's a bachelor—eh? d—d selfish and all that—wife moping in a two-storied house at Bayswater—husband swaggering in a Louis Quartorze drawing-room, in Pall Mall. Can't dine at home to-day, my love, where's the latch-key? Promised to have a mutton-chop at the club with an old brother officer. Wife dines on chicken broth with the children, and has a poached egg at her tea. Husband begins with oysters and ends with a pint of claret, by himself, too —we all know who the old brother officer is—lives in the Edgeware-road!—how d' ye mean?' Lacquers goes off with a horse-laugh, he enjoys the joke

amazingly, it is just suited to his comprehension. 'Then we 'll meet in an hour from now,' says he, as the crowd, surging in, breaks up their little conclave, 'should like to show you our pictures—aw—fond of high art, you know—and our staircase, Arabian, you know, with the ornaments quite Mosaic. *A-diawolo*!' And pleased with what he believes to be his real Spanish farewell, our dandy-linguist elbows his way up to Lady Ormolu, and gladdens that panting peeress with the pearls and rubies of his intellectual conversation.

All this time Blanche is nearing the ordeal. If she thought the crowd too dense before, what would she not give now to bury herself in its sheltering ranks. An ample duchess is before her with a red-haired daughter, but everywhere around her there is room to breathe, and walk, and *to be seen*. Through an open door she catches a glimpse of the presence and the stately circle before whom she must pass. Good-natured royalties of both sexes, stand smiling and bowing, and striving to put frightened subjects at their ease, and carrying their kind hearts on their handsome open countenances; but they are all whirling round and round to Blanche, and she cannot tell uniforms from satin gowns, epaulettes from ostrich plumes, old from young. It strikes her that there is something ridiculous in the way that a central figure performs its backward movement, and the horrid conviction comes upon her that she will have to go

through the same ceremony before all those royal eyes, and think of her train, her feathers, her curtsey, and her escape, all at one and the same agonizing moment. A foreign diplomatist makes a complimentary remark in French, addressed to his neighbour, a tall soldier-like German, with nankeen moustaches. The German unbends for an instant that frigid air of military reserve which has of late years usurped the place of what we used to consider foreign volubility and politeness—he stoops to reply in a whisper, but soon recovers himself, stiffer and straighter than before.

Neither the compliment nor its reception serves to reassure Blanche. In vain she endeavours to peep past the duchess's ample figure, and see how the red-haired daughter pulls through. The duchess rejoices in substantial materials, both of dress; and fabric, so Blanche can see nothing. Another moment, and she hears her own name and Lady Mount Helicon's pronounced in a whisper, every syllable of which thrills upon her nerves like a musket-shot. She reaches the door—she catches a glimpse of a tall handsome young man, with a blue ribbon, and a formidable-looking phalanx of princes, princesses, foreign ambassadors, and English courtiers, in a receding circle, of which she feels she is about to become the centre. Blanche would like to cry, but she is in the Presence now, and we follow her no further. It would not become us to enlarge upon the

majesty which commands reverence for the queen, or the beauty which wins homage for the woman—to speak of her as do her servants, her household, her nobility, or all who are personally known to her, would entail such language of devoted affection, as in our case might be termed flattery and adulation. To hurrah and throw our hats up for her, with the fervent loyalty of an English mob—to cheer with the whole impulse of every stout English heart, and the energy of good English lungs, is more in accordance with our position and our habits, and so 'Hip, hip, hip,—God save the Queen!'

'Oh, dear, if I 'd only known,' said Blanche, some two hours afterwards, as Rosine was brushing her hair, and taking out the costly ostrich plumes and the string of pearls, 'I needn't have been so frightened after all! So good, so kind, so considerate, I shouldn't the least mind being presented every day!'

CHAPTER XI.

Campaigning Abroad.

SHIFTING THE SCENE—UNDER CANVAS—A VETERAN AND A YOUNG SOLDIER—THE CHARMS OF A BIVOUAC—ORDERS FOR THE MORROW—A SOLDIER'S DREAM—AN EARLY START—THE MARCH—THE ENGAGEMENT—FORTUNE OF WAR—CHARLIE'S COMMAND—THE BLUE ONE DOWN!

IN the 'good old times' when railways were not, and the *ne plus ultra* of speed was after all but ten miles an hour, he who would take in hand to construct a tale, a poem, or a drama, was much hampered by certain material conditions of time and place, termed by critics the unities, and the observance of which effectually prevented all glaring vagaries of plot, and many a *deus ex machinâ* whose unaccountable presence would have saved an infinity of trouble to author as well as reader. But we have changed all this now-a-days. When Puck undertook to girdle the earth in 'forty minutes,' it was no doubt esteemed a 'sporting offer,' not that Oberon seems to have been man enough to 'book' it, but we, who back Electra, should vote such a forty minutes 'dead slow'—'no pace at all!' Ours are the screw-propeller and the flying-express—ours the

thrilling wire that rings a bell at Paris, even while we touch the handle in London—ours the greatest possible hurry on the least possible provocation—we ride at speed, we drive at speed—eat, drink, sleep, smoke, talk, and deliberate, still at full speed—make fortunes, and spend them—fall in love, and out of it—are married, divorced, robbed, ruined, and enriched all *ventre à terre;* nay, Time seems to be grudged, even for the last journey to our long home. 'Twas but the other day we saw a hearse clattering along an honest twelve miles an hour! Well, forward! is the word—like the French grenadier's account of the strategy by which his emperor invariably outmanœuvred the enemy. There were but two words of command, said he, ever heard in the grand army—the one was '*En avant! sacr-r-ré ventre-bleu!*' the other '*Sacr-r-ré ventre-bleu! en avant!*' So forward be it! and we will not apologise for shifting the scene some thousands of miles, and taking a peep at our friend 'Cousin Charlie,' fulfilling his destiny in that heaven-forsaken country called Kaffir-land. When it rains in South Africa it rains to some purpose, pelting down even sheets of water, to which a thunder-storm at home is but as the trickling of a gutter to the Falls of Niagara—nature endues her whole person in that same leaden-coloured garment, and the world assumes a desolate appearance of the most torpid misery. The greasy savage, almost naked, crouching and coiling like a snake wherever

covert is to be obtained, bears his ducking philosophically enough; he can but be wet to the skin at the worst, and is dry again almost before the leaves are: but the British soldier, with his clothing and accoutrements, his pouches, havre-sacks, biscuits, and ammunition—not to mention 'Brown Bess,' his mainstay and dependance—nothing punishes him so much as wet. Tropical heat he bears without a murmur, and a vertical sun but elicits sundry jocose allusions to 'beer.' Canadian cold is met with a jest biting as its own frost, and a hearty laugh, that rings through the clear atmosphere with a twang of home; but he hates water—drench him thoroughly and you put him to the proof—albeit he never fails, yet, like Mark Tapley, he *does* deserve credit for being *jolly* under such adverse circumstances.

Look at that encampment—a detached position, in which two companies of a British regiment with a handful of Hottentots are stationed, to hold in check some thousands of savages: the old story—out-numbered a hundred to one, and wresting laurels even from such fearful odds. Look at one of the heroes—the only one visible indeed, as he paces to and fro to keep himself warm. A short beat truly, for he is within shot of yonder hill, and the Kaffirs have muskets as well as 'assegais.' No shelter or sentry-box is there here, and our warrior at twelve-pence a-day has 'reversed arms' to keep his firelock dry, and covers his person as well as he can with a

much-patched weather-worn grey great coat, once spruce and smart, of the regimental pattern, but now scarcely distinguishable as a uniform. To and fro he walks—wet, weary, hungry, and liable to be shot at a moment's notice. He has not slept in a bed for months, and has almost forgotten the taste of pure water, not to mention beer; yet is there a charm in soldiering, and through it all the man is contented and cheerful — even happy. A slight movement in his rear makes him turn half-round; between him and his comrades stands a tent somewhat less uncomfortable-looking than the rest, and from beneath its folds comes out a hand, followed by a young bronzed face, which we recognise as 'Cousin Charlie's' ere the whole figure emerges from its shelter, and gives itself a hearty shake and stretch. It is indeed, Charlie, 'growed out of knowledge,' as Mrs. Gamp says, and with his moustaches visibly and tangibly increased to a very warlike volume. The weather is clearing, as in that country it often does towards sundown, and Charlie, like an old campaigner, is easing the tent ropes, already strained with wet. 'I wish I knew the orders,' says the young Lancer to some one inside, 'or how I'm to get back to head-quarters—not but what you fellows have treated me like an alderman.' 'You should have been here yesterday, my boy,' said a voice from within, apparently between the puffs of a short wheezing pipe. 'We only finished the biscuit this

morning, and I could have given you a mouthful of brandy from the bottom of my flask—it is dry enough now, at all events. The baccy 'll soon be done too, and we shall be floored altogether if we stay here much longer.' 'Why the whole front don't advance I can't think,' replied Charlie, with the ready criticism of a young soldier. 'If they'd only let us get *at* these black beggars, we'd astonish them!' 'Heaven knows,' answered the voice, evidently getting drowsy, 'our fellows are all tired of waiting—by Jove,' he added, brightening up in an instant, 'here comes 'Old Swipes;' I 'll lay my life we shall be engaged before daybreak, the old boy looks so jolly!'—and even as he spoke a hale, grey-headed man, with a rosy countenance and a merry dark eye, was seen returning the sentry's salute as he advanced to the tent which had sheltered these young officers, and passing on with a good-humoured nod to Charlie, entered upon an eager whispered conversation with the gentleman inside, whose drowsiness seemed to have entirely forsaken him. 'Old Swipes,' as he was irreverently called (a nickname of which, as of most military sobriquets, the origin had long been forgotten), was the senior captain of the regiment, one of those gallant fellows who fight their way up without purchase, serving in every climate under heaven, and invariably becoming grey of head long ere they lose the greenness and freshness of heart which in the Service alone outlive

the cares and disappointments that wait on middle age.

Now Charlie had been sent to 'Old Swipes' with despatches from head-quarters. One of the general's aide-de-camps was wounded, another sick, an *extra* already ordered on a *particular service,* and Charlie, with the dash and gallantry which had distinguished him from boyhood, volunteered to carry the important missives nearly a hundred miles through a country not a yard of which he knew, and threading whole hordes of the enemy with no arms but his sabre and pistols, no guide but a little unintelligible Hottentot. From the Kat River frontier to the defenceless portals of Fort Beaufort, the whole district was covered with swarms of predatory savages, and but that Fortune proverbially favours the brave, our young lancer might have found himself in a very unpleasant predicament. Fifty miles finished the lad's charger, and he had accomplished the remainder of his journey, walking and riding turn-about with his guide on the hardy little animal of the latter. No wonder our dismounted dragoon was weary—no wonder the rations of tough beef and muddy water which they gave him when he arrived elicited the compliment we have already mentioned to the good cheer of 'The Fighting Light-Bobs,' as the regiment to which 'Old Swipes' and his detachment belonged was affectionately nick-named in the division. The great thing, however, was accomplished—wet, weary,

and exhausted, Charlie and his guide arrived at their destination by day-break of the second day. The young lancer delivered his despatches to the officer in command, was received like a brother into a subaltern's tent, already containing two inhabitants, and slept soundly through the day, till awakened at sunset by a strong appetite for supper, and the absolute necessity for slackening the tent-ropes recorded above.

'Kettering, you must join our council of war,' said the cheery voice of the old captain from within, 'there's no man better entitled than yourself to know the contents of my despatches. Come in, my boy; I can give you a pipe, if nothing else.' Charlie lifted the wet sail-cloth, and crept in—the conclave did not look so very uncomfortable after all. Certainly there was but little room, but no men pack so close as soldiers. The old captain was sitting cross-legged on a folded blanket, in the centre, clad in a russet-coloured coat that had once been scarlet, with gold lace tarnished down to the splendour of rusty copper. A pair of regimental trousers, plentifully patched and strapped with leather, adorned his lower man, and on his head he wore a once-burnished shako, much gashed and damaged by a Kaffir's assegai. He puffed forth volumes of smoke from a short black pipe, and appeared in the most exuberant spirits, notwithstanding the deficiencies of his exterior; the real proprietor of the tent, a swarthy, handsome

fellow, with a lightning eye and huge black beard and whiskers, was leaning against the centre support of his domicile, in a blue frock-coat and buckskin trousers, looking very handsome and very like a gentleman (indeed, he is a peer's younger son), though no 'old clothesman' would have given him eighteen-pence for the whole of his costume. He had hospitably vacated his seat on a battered portmanteau, 'warranted solid leather,' with the maker's name, in the Strand—it seemed so odd to see it there—and was likewise smoking furiously, as he listened to the orders of his commander. A small tin basin, a canister of tobacco, nearly finished, a silver hunting-flask, alas! quite empty, and a heap of cloaks, with an old blanket, in the corner, completed the furniture of this warlike palace. It was very like Charlie's own tent at head-quarters, save that his cavalry accoutrements gave an air of finish to that dwelling, of which he was justly proud. So he felt quite at home as he took his seat on the portmanteau, and filled his pipe. 'Just the orders I wanted,' said the old captain, between his whiffs, 'we've been here long enough, and to-morrow we are to advance at daybreak. I am directed to move upon that 'kloof' we have reconnoitred every day since we came, and after forming a junction with the Rifles, we are to get possession of the heights.'

'The river will be out after this rain,' interrupted

the handsome lieutenant, 'but that's no odds, our fellows can all swim—'gad, they want washing!'

'Steady, my lad,' said the veteran, 'we'll have none of that; I've got a Fingo at the quarter-guard here that'll take us over dry-shod. I've explained to him what I mean, and if he don't understand it now he will to-morrow morning. A 'Light-Bob' on each side, with his arms sloped—directly the water comes in at the rent in these old boots,' holding up at the same time a much damaged pair of Wellingtons, 'down goes the Fingo, poor devil, and out go my skirmishers, till we reach the cattle-ford at Van-Dryburgh.'

'I don't think the beggar *will* throw us over,' replied the subaltern. 'I suppose I'd better get them under arms before daybreak; the nights are infernally dark, though, in this beastly country, but my fellows all turn out smartest now when they've no light.'

'Before daybreak, certainly,' replied 'Old Swipes'; 'no whist *here*, Kettering, to keep us up very late. Well,' he added, resuming his directions to his subaltern, 'we'll have the detachment under arms by four. Take Serjeant Macintosh and the best of 'the flankers' to form an advanced guard. Bid him make every yard of ground good, particularly where there's *bush*, but on no account to fire unless he's attacked. We'll advance in column of sections—

mind that—they're handier that way for the ground —and Harry—where's Harry?' 'Here, sir!' said a voice, and a pale, sickly-looking boy, apparently about seventeen years of age, emerged from under the cloaks and blankets in the corner where he had been lying, half-asleep and thoroughly exhausted with the hardships of a life which it requires the constitution of manhood to undergo. Poor Harry! with what sickening eagerness his mother, the clergyman's widow, grasps at the daily paper, when the African mail is due. How she shudders to see the great black capitals, with 'Important news from the Cape.' What a hero his sisters think Harry, and how mamma alone turns pale at the very name of war, and prays for him night and morning on her knees till the pale face and wasted form of her darling stand betwixt her and her Maker. And Harry, too, thinks sometimes of his mother, but oh! how different is the child's divided affection from the all-engrossing tenderness of the mother's love. The boy is fond of 'soldiering,' and his heart swells as 'Old Swipes' gives him his orders in a paternal tone of kindness. 'Harry, I shall entrust you with the rear-guard, and you must keep up your communications with the serjeant's guard I shall leave here. He will probably be relieved by the Rifles, and you can then join us in the front. If they don't show before twelve o'clock, fall back here; pack up the baggage, right-about-face and join 'the levies,' they're exactly five miles in our

rear; if you're in difficulties, ask Serjeant File what is best to be done, only don't club'em, my boy, as you did at Limerick.'

'Well sir,' said the handsome lieutenant, 'we've all got our orders now, except Kettering—what are we to do with him?'

'Give him some supper first,' replied the jolly commandant; 'but how to get him back I don't know—we've had a fine stud of oxen for the last ten days, but as for a horse, I have not seen one since I left Cape Town.'

'We're doing nothing at head-quarters, sir,' exclaimed Charlie, with flashing eyes; 'will you allow me to join the attack, to-morrow, with your people?'

The three officers looked at him approvingly, and the ensign muttered, 'By gad, he's a trump, and no mistake!' but 'Old Swipes' shook his grey head with a half melancholy smile as he scanned the boy's handsome face and shapely figure, set off by his blue lancer uniform, muddy and travel-stained as it was. 'I've seen many a fine fellow go down,' thought the veteran, 'and I like it less and less—this lad's too good for the Kaffirs—d——n me, I shall never get used to it;' however, he did not quite know how to refuse so soldierlike a request, so he only coughed, and said, 'Well—I don't approve of *volunteering*—we old soldiers go where we're ordered, but we *never volunteer*. Still, I suppose you won't stay here, with fighting in the front. 'Gad, you *shall* go—you're a

real good one, and I *like* you for it.' So the fine old fellow seized Charlie's hand and wrung it hard, with the tears in his eyes.

And now our three friends prepared to make themselves comfortable. The old captain's tent was the largest, but it was not water-tight, and consequently stood in a swamp. His supper, therefore, was added to the joint-stock, and the four gentlemen who, at the best club in London, would have turned up their noses at turtle because it was *thick*, or champagne because it was sweet, sat down quite contentedly to half-raw lumps of stringy beef and a tin mug only half filled with the muddiest of water, glad to get even that.

How they laughed and chatted, and joked about their fare; to have heard them talk one would have supposed they were at dinner within a day's march of Pall Mall. London—the opera, the turf—the ring—each and all had their turn, and when the serjeant on duty came to report the 'lights out,' said lights consisting of two lanterns for the whole detachment, Charlie had just proposed 'fox-hunting' as a toast with which to finish the last sip of brandy, and treated his entertainers to a 'view-holloa' *in a whisper*, that he might not alarm the camp which, save for the lowing of certain oxen in the rear, was ere long hushed in the most profound repose.

Now these oxen were a constant source of confusion and annoyance to the 'old captain' and his

myrmidons, whose orderly, soldier-like habits were continually broken through by their perverse charge. Of all the contradictory, self-willed, hair-brained brutes on the face of the earth, commend us to an ox in Kaffir-land. He is troublesome enough when first driven off by his black despoilers, but when recaptured by British troops he is worse than ever, as though he brought back with him, from his sojourn in the bush, some of the devilry of his temporary owners, and was determined to resent upon his preservers all the injuries he had undergone during his unwilling peregrinations. Fortunately those now remaining with the detachment were but a small number, destined to become most execrable beef, large herds retaken from the savages having already been sent to the rear; but even this handful were perpetually running riot, breaking out of their 'Kraal' on the most causeless and imaginary alarms, when in the camp, and on the march making a point of 'knocking up' invariably at the most critical moment. Imagine the difficulties of a commander when, in addition to ground of which he knows comparatively nothing, of an enemy out-numbering him hundreds to one, lurking besides in an impenetrable bush, where he can neither be reached nor seen—of an extended line of operation in a country where the roads are either impassable or there are none at all—and above all, of a trying climate, with a sad deficiency of water—he has to weaken his

already small force by furnishing a cattle-guard, and to prepare himself for the contingency of some thousands of frantic animals breaking loose (which they assuredly will should his position be forced), and the inevitable confusion which must be the result of such an untoward liberation. The Kaffirs have a knack of driving these refractory brutes in a manner which seems unattainable to a white man. It is an interesting sight to watch a couple of tall, dark savages, almost naked, and with long staves in their hands, manœuvring several hundred head of cattle with apparently but little trouble. Even the Hottentots seem to have a certain mysterious influence over the horned troop; but for an English soldier, although goaded by his bayonet, they appear to entertain the most profound contempt.

Charlie, however, cared little for ox or Kaffir; the lowing of the one no more disturbed him than the proximity of the other. Was he not at last in front of the enemy? Should he not to-morrow begin his career of glory? The boy felt his very life-blood thrill in his veins as the fighting propensity—the spirit of Cain, never quite dormant within us—rose to his heart. There he lay in a corner of the dark tent, dressed and ready for the morrow, with his sword and pistols at his head, covered with a blanket and a large cloak, his whereabout only discernible by the red glow from his last pipe before going to sleep. The handsome lieutenant was al-

ready wrapped in slumber and an enormous rough great-coat (not strictly regulation). The ensign was far away in dream-land; and Charlie had watched the light die out from their respective pipes with drowsy eyes, while the regular step of the sentry outside smote less and less distinctly on his ear. He had gone through two very severe days, and had not been in a bed for weeks. Gradually his limbs relaxed and tingled with the delightful languor of rest after *real* fatigue. Once or twice he woke up with a start as fancy played her usual tricks with the weary, then his head declined, his jaw dropped, the pipe fell to the ground, and Charlie was fast asleep.

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Far, far away on a mountain in Inverness, the wild stag is *belling* to the distant corries, and snuffing the keen north air as he stamps ever and anon with lightning hoof that cuts the heather tendrils asunder, and flings them on the breeze. Is he not the great master-hart of the parcel? and shall he not be circumverted and stretched on the moor, ere the fading twilight darkens into night? Verily, he must be stalked warily, cautiously, for the wind has shifted and the lake is already ruffling into pointed white-crested waves, rising as in anger, while their spray, hurried before the tempest, drifts in long continuous wreaths athwart the surface. Fitful gusts, the pent-up sobs of rising fury, that must burst or be released, chase the filmy scud across that pale moon

which is but veiled, and not obscured, while among the firs and alders that skirt the water's edge the wind moans and shrieks, like an imprisoned demon wailing for his freedom. Mists are rising around the hazy forms of the deer; cold, chilling vapours, through which the mighty stag looms like some gigantic phantom, and still he swells in defiance, and *bells* abroad his trumpet-note of war. Charlie's finger is on the trigger; Uncle Baldwin, disguised as a Highlander, whispers in his ear the thrilling caution, 'take time.' The wind howls hideously, and phantom shapes, floating in the moonlight, mock, and gibber, and toss their long, lean arms, and wave their silver hair. No, the rifle is *not* cocked; that stubborn lock defies the force of human fingers—the mist is thickening and the stag moves. Charlie implores Uncle Baldwin to assist him, and drops upon his knees to cover the retiring quarry with his useless weapon. The phantoms gather round; their mist-wreaths turn to muslin dresses, and their silver hair to glossy locks of mortal hues. The roaring tempest softens to an old familiar strain. Mary Delaval is before him. Her pale, sweet face is bent upon the kneeling boy, with looks of unutterable love, and her white hand passes over his brow with an almost imperceptible caress. Her face sinks gradually to his—her breath is on his temples—his lips clings to hers—and he starts with horror at the kiss of love, striking cold and clammy from a grin-

ning skull! Horror! the rifleman, whose skeleton he shuddered to find beneath his horses' feet not eight-and-forty hours ago! What does he hear in the drawing-room at home? *Home*—yes, he is at home, at last. It must have been fancy—the recollections of his African campaign! They are all gone to bed. He hears the General's well-known tramp dying away along the passage; and he takes his candle to cross the spacious hall, dark and gloomy in that flickering light. Ha! seated on the stairs as on a throne, frowns a presence that he dare not pass. A tall, dark figure, in the shape of a man, yet with angel beauty no angel form of good—glorious in the grandeur of despair—magnificent in the pomp and glare of hell—those lineaments awful in their very beauty—those deep unfathomable eyes, with their eternity of suffering, defiance, remorse, all but repentance or submission! Could mortal look and not quail? Could man front and not be blasted at the sight? On his lofty forehead sits a diadem, and on the centre of his brow, burned in and scorched, as it were, to the very bone, behold the seal of the Destroyer—the single imprint of a finger.

The boy stands paralyzed with affright. The principle of Evil waves him on and on, even to the very hem of his garment; but a prayer rises to the sleeper's lips; with a convulsive effort he speaks it forth aloud, and the spell is broken. The mortal is

engaged with a mortal enemy. Those waving robes turn to a leopard-skin *kaross*. The glorious figure to an athletic savage, and the immortal beauty to the grinning, chattering lineaments of a hideous Kaffir. Charlie bounds at him like a tiger—they fight—they close—and he is locked in the desperate embrace of life or death with his ghastly foe. Charlie is undermost! His enemy's eyes are starting from their sockets—his white teeth glare with cannibal-like ferocity—and his hand is on the boy's throat with a gripe of iron. One fearful wrench to get free—one last superhuman effort of despair, and— . . . . Charlie wakes in the struggle!—wakes to find it all a dream; and the cold air, the chilling harbinger of dawn, stealing into the tent to refresh and invigorate the half-suffocated sleepers. He felt little inclination to resume his slumbers; his position had been a sufficiently uncomfortable one. His head having slipped from the pistol-holsters on which it had rested, and the clasp of his cloak, fastening at the throat, having well-nigh strangled him in his sleep. The handsome lieutenant's matter-of-fact yawn on waking would have dispelled more horrid dreams than Charlie's, and the real business of the coming day soon chased from his mind all recollections of his imaginary struggle. Breakfast was like the supper of the preceding night—half-raw beef, eaten cold, and a whiff from a short pipe. Ere Charlie had finished his ration, dark though it was, the men

had fallen in; the advanced guard had started; Ensign Harry had received his final instructions, and 'Old Swipes' gave the word of command, in a low guarded tone—'Slope arms! By your left—Quick march!'

Day dawned on a spirit-stirring scene. With the slinging, easy step of those accustomed to long and toilsome marches, the detachment moved rapidly forward, now lessening its front as it arrived at some narrow defile, now 'marking time' to allow of its rear coming up, without effort, into the proper place. Bronzed bold faces theirs, with the bluff good-humoured air of the English soldier, who takes warfare as it comes, with an oath and a jest. Reckless of strategy as of hardship, he neither knows nor cares what his enemy may be about, nor what dispositions may be made by his own officers. If his flank be turned he fights on, with equal unconcern, 'it is no business of his;' if his amunition be exhausted he betakes himself to the bayonet, and swears 'the beggars may take their change out of that!'

The advanced-guard, led by the handsome subaltern, was several hundred paces in front. The Hottentots brought up the rear, and the 'Fighting Light-Bobs,' commanded by their grey-headed captain, formed the column. With them marched Charlie, conspicuous in his blue lancer uniform, now respectfully addressing his superior officer, now jest-

ing, good-humouredly, with his temporary comrades. The sun rose on a jovial light-hearted company: when next his beams shall gild the same arid plains, the same twining *mimosas*, the same glorious landscape, shut in by the jagged peaks of the Anatola mountains, they will glance back from many a firelock, lying ownerless on the sand; they will deepen the clammy hue of death on many a bold forehead; they will fail to warm many a gallant heart, cold and motionless for ever. But the men go on all the same, laughing and jesting merrily, as they 'march at ease,' and beguile the way with mirth and song.

'We'll get a sup o' brandy to-night, any how, won't us, Bill?' says a weather-beaten 'Light-Bob,' to his front-rank man, a thirsty old soldier as was ever 'confined to barracks.'

'Aye,' replies Bill, 'them black beggars has got plenty of lush—more 's the pity, and they doesn't give none to their wives—more 's their sense. Ax your pardon, sir,' he adds, turning to Charlie, 'but we shall advance right upon their centre, now, anyways, shan't us?'

Ere Charlie could reply he was interrupted by Bill's comrade, who seemed to have rather a *penchant* for Kaffir ladies: 'Likely young women they be, too, Bill, those niggers' wives; why, every Kaffir has a dozen at least, and we've have only three to a company; wouldn't I like to be a Kaffir!'

'*Black*!' replied Bill, in a tone of intense disgust.

'What's the odds?' urged the matrimonial champion, 'a black wife's a sight better than none at all,' and straightway he began to hum a military ditty, of which fate only permitted him to complete the first two stanzas:—

'They're sounding the charge for a brush, my boys!
And we'll carry their camp with a rush, my boys!
When we've driven them out, I make no doubt,
We'll find they've got plenty of lush, my boys!
For the beggars delight
To sit soaking all night,
Black although they be.

'And when we get liquor so cheap, my boys!
We'll do nothing but guzzle and sleep, my boys!
And sit on the grass with a Kaffir lass,
Though smutty the wench as a sweep, my boys!
For the Light Brigade
Are the lads for a maid,
Black although she be.

'Come, stow that!' interrupted Bill, as the *ping* of a ball whistled over their heads, followed by the sharp report of a musket; 'here's music for your singing, and dancing, too, 'faith,' he added, as the rear files of the advanced-guard came running in; and 'Old Swipes' exclaimed, 'By Jove! they're engaged.—Attention! steady, men! close up,—close up,'—and, throwing out a handful of skirmishers to clear the bush immediately in his front, and support his advanced-guard, he moved the column forward at 'the double,' gained some rising ground, behind

which he halted them, and himself ran on to reconnoitre. A sharp fire had by this time commenced on the right, and Charlie's heart beat painfully whilst he remained inactive, covered by a position from which he could see nothing. It was not, however, for long. The 'Light-Bobs' were speedily ordered to advance, and as they gained the crest of the hill, a magnificent view of the conflict opened at once upon their eyes.

The Rifles had been beforehand with them, and were already engaged; their dark forms hurrying to and fro, as they ran from covert to covert, were only to be distinguished from the savages by the rapidity with which their thin white lines of smoke emerged from bush and brake, and the regularity with which they forced position after position, compared with the tumultuous gestures and desultory movements of the enemy. Already the Kaffirs were forced across the ford of which we have spoken, and, though they mustered in great numbers on the opposite bank, swarming like bees along the rising ground, they appeared to waver in their manœuvres, and to be inclined to retire. A mounted officer gallops up, and says a few words to the grey-headed captain. The 'Light-Bobs' are formed into column of sections, and plunge gallantly into the ford. Charlie's right-hand man falls pierced by an assagai, and, as his head declines beneath the bubbling water, and his blood mingles with the stream, our volunteer feels

'the devil' rising rapidly to his heart. Charlie's teeth are set tight, though he is scarce aware of his own sensations, and the boy is dangerous with his pale face and flashing eyes.

The 'Light-Bobs' deploy into line on the opposite bank, covered by an effective fire from the Rifles, and advance as if they were on parade. 'Old Swipes' feels his heart leap for joy. On they march like one man, and the dark masses of the enemy fly before them. 'Well done, my lads!' says the old captain, as, from their flank, he marks the regularity of their movement. They are his very children now, and he is not thinking of the little blue-eyed girl, far away at home. A belt of *mimosas* is in their front, and it must be carried with the bayonet! The 'Light-Bobs' charge, with a wild hurrah! and a withering volley, very creditable to the savages, well nigh staggers them as they approach. 'Old Swipes' runs forward, waving them on, his shako off, and his grey locks streaming in the breeze—down he goes! with a musket-ball crashing through his forehead. Charlie could yell with rage, and a fierce longing for blood. There is a calm, matronly woman tending flowers, some thousand miles off, in a small garden in the north of England, and a little girl sitting wistfully at her lessons by her mother's side. They are a widow and an orphan—but the handsome lieutenant will get his promotion without purchase; death-vacancies invariably go in the regiment, and even now he takes the command.

'Kettering,' says he, cool and composed, as if he were but giving orders at a common field-day, 'take a subdivisions and clear that ravine; when you are once across you can turn his flank. Forward! my lads, and if they've any nonsense *give 'em the bayonet!*'

Charlie now finds himself actually in command, aye! and in something more than a skirmish, something that begins to look uncommonly like a general action. Waving the men on with his sword, he dashes into the ravine, and in another instant is hand-to-hand with the enemy. What a moment of noise, smoke, and confusion it is! Crashing blows, fearful oaths, the Kaffir war-cry, and the soldiers' death-groan, mingle in the very discord of hell. A wounded Kaffir seizes Charlie by the legs, and a 'Light-Bob' runs the savage through the body, the ghastly weapon flashing out between the Kaffir's ribs.

'You've got it *now*, you black beggar!' says the soldier, as he coolly wipes his dripping bayonet on a tuft of burnt-up grass. While yet he speaks he is writhing in his death-pang, his jaws transfixed by a quivering assagai. A Kaffir chief, of athletic frame and sinewy proportions, distinguished by the grotesque character of his arms and his tiger-skin *kaross*, springs at the young lancer, like a wild-cat. The boy's sword gleams through that dusky body even in mid-air.

'Well done, blue-un!' shout the men, and again there is a wild hurrah! The young one never felt like this before. * * * Hand-to-hand the savages have been beaten from their defences, and they are in full retreat. One little band has forced the ravine and gained the opposite bank. With a thrilling cheer they scale its rugged surface, Charlie waving his sword and leading them gallantly on. The old privates swear he is a good 'un. 'Forward, lads! Hurrah! for *blue 'un!*'

The boy has all but reached the brink; his hand is stretched to grasp a bush, that overhangs the steep, but his step totters, his limbs collapse—down, down he goes, rolling over and over amongst the brushwood, and the blue lancer uniform lies a tumbled heap at the bottom of the ravine, whilst the cheer of the pursuing 'Light-Bobs' dies fainter and fainter on the sultry air, as the chase rolls farther and farther into the desert fastnesses of Kaffir-land.

CHAPTER XII.

Campaigning at Home.

THE SOLDIER IN PEACE—THE LION AND THE LAMB—'THE GIRLS WE LEAVE BEHIND US'—A PLAIN QUESTION—THE STRONG MAN'S STRUGGLE—FATHERLY KINDNESS—THE 'PEACE AND PLENTY'—A LADY-KILLER'S PROJECTS—WAKING THOUGHTS.

IN a neat, well-appointed barouche, with clever high-stepping brown horses, and everything complete, a party of three well-dressed persons are gliding easily out of town, sniffing by anticipation the breezes of the country, and greeting every morsel of verdure with a rapture only known to those who have been for several weeks in London. Past the barracks at Knightsbridge, where the windows are occupied by a race of giants in moustaches and shirt-sleeves, and the officers in front of their quarters are educating a poodle; past the gate at Kensington, with its smartest of light-dragoon sentries, and the gardens with their fine old trees disguised in soot; past dead-walls overtopped with waving branches; on through a continuous line of streets that will apparently reach to Bath; past public-houses innumerable, and grocery-shops without end; past Hammersmith, with its multiplicity of academies, and

Turnham-green, and Chiswick, and suburban terraces with almost fabulous names, and detached houses with the scaffolding still up; past market gardens and rosaries, till Brentford is reached, where the disappointed traveller, pining for the country, almost deems himself transported back again east of Temple Bar. But Brentford is soon left behind, and a glimpse of 'the silver Thames' rejoices eyes that have been aching for something farther a-field than the Serpentine, and prepares them for the unbounded views and free, fresh landscape afforded by Hounslow Heath. 'This is really the country,' says Blanche, inhaling the pure air with a sigh of positive delight, while the General exclaims, at the same instant, with his accustomed vigour, 'Zounds! the blockhead's missed the turn to the barracks, after all.'

The ladies are very smart; and even Mary Delaval (the third occupant of the carriage), albeit quieter and more dignified than ever, has dressed in gaudier plumage than is her wont, as is the practice of her sex when they are about to attend what they are pleased to term 'a breakfast.' As for Blanche, she is too charming—such a little gossamer bonnet, stuck at the very back of that glossy little head, so that the beholder knows not whether to be most fascinated by the ethereal beauty of the fabric, or wonder-struck at the dexterity with which it is kept on. Then the dresses of the pair are like the hues of the morning, though of their texture, as of their

'trimmings,' it becomes us not to hazard an opinion. Talk of beauty unadorned, and all that! Take the handsomest figure that ever inspired a statuary—dress her, or rather undress her, to the costume of the Three Graces, or the Nine Muses, or any of those *dowdies* immortalised by ancient art, and place her alongside of a moderately good-looking Frenchwoman, with dark eyes and small feet, who has been permitted to dress *herself*: why, the one is a mere corporeal mass of shapely humanity; the other a sparkling emanation of light, and smiles, and 'tulle' (or whatever they call it), and coquetry, and all that is most irresistible. Blanche and Mary, with the assistance of good taste and good milliners, were almost perfect types of their different styles of feminine beauty. The General, too, was wondrously attired. Retaining the predilections of his youth, he shone in a variety of under-waistcoats, each more gorgeous than its predecessor, surmounting the whole by a blue coat of unexampled brilliancy and peculiar construction. Like most men who are not in the habit of 'getting themselves up' every day, he was always irritable when thus clothed in 'his best,' and was now peculiarly fidgetty as to the right turn by which his carriage should reach the barracks where 'The Loyal Hussars,' under the temporary command of Major D'Orville, were about to give a breakfast of unspeakable splendour and hospitality.

'That way—no—the other way, you blockhead!—

straight on, and short to the right!' vociferated the General to his bewildered coachman, as they drew up at the barrack-gate, and Blanche timidly suggested they should ask 'that officer,' alluding to a dashing, handsome individual guarding the entrance from behind an enormous pair of dark moustaches.

'That's only the sentry, Blanche,' remarked Mary Delaval, whose early military experience made her more at home here than her companion.

'Dear,' replied Blanche, colouring a little at her mistake, 'I thought he was a captain, at least—*he's very good-looking.*'

But the barouche rolls on to the mess-room door, and although the ladies are somewhat disappointed to find their entertainers in plain clothes (a woman's idea of a hussar being that he should live and die *en grande tenue*); yet the said plain clothes are so well put on, the moustaches and whiskers so carefully arranged, and the fair ones themselves received with such *empressement*, as to make full amends for any deficiency of warlike costume. Besides, the surrounding atmosphere is so thoroughly military. A rough-rider is bringing a young horse from the school; a trumpet is sounding in the barrack-yard; troopers lounging about in picturesque undress are sedulously saluting their officers; all is suggestive of the show and glitter which makes a soldier's life so fascinating to woman.

Major D'Orville is ready to hand them out of the

carriage. Lacquers is stationed on the door-steps. Captain Clank and Cornet Capon are in attendance to receive their cloaks. Even Sir Ascot Uppercrust, who is here as a guest, lays aside his usual *nonchalance*, and actually 'hopes Miss Kettering didn't catch cold yesterday getting home from Chiswick.' Clank whispers to Capon that he thinks 'Uppy is making strong running;' and Capon strokes his nascent moustaches, and oracularly replies, 'The divil doubt him.'

No wonder ladies like a military entertainment. It certainly is the fashion among soldiers, as among their sea-faring brethren, to profess far greater devotion and exhibit more *empressement* in their manner to the fair sex than is customary in this age with civilians.

The latter, more particularly that maligned class, 'the young men of the present day,' are not prone to put themselves much out of their way for any one, and treat you, fair daughters of England, with a mixture of patronage and carelessness which is far from complimentary. How different you find it when you visit a barrack, or are shown over a man-of-war! Respectful deference waits on your every expression, admiring eyes watch your charming movements, and stalwart arms are proffered to assist your delicate steps. Handsome sunburnt countenances explain to you how the biscuit is served out; or moustaches of incalculable volume wait your

answer as to 'what polka you choose their band to perform.' You make conquests all around you, and wherever you go your foot is on their necks; but do not for this think that your image never *can* be effaced from these warlike hearts. A good many of them, even the best-looking ones, have got wives and children at home; and the others, unincumbered though they be, save by their debts, are apt to entertain highly anti-matrimonial sentiments, and to frame their conduct on sundry aphorisms of a very faithless tendency, purporting that 'blue water is a certain cure for heart-ache;' that judicious hussars are entitled 'to love and to ride away'; with other maxims of a like inconstant nature. Nay, in both services there is a favourite air of inspiriting melody, the burden and title of which, monstrous as it may appear, are these unfeeling words, 'The girls we leave behind us!' It is *always* played on marching out of a town.

But however ill our 'captain bold' of the present day may behave to 'the girl he leaves behind him,' the lady in his front has small cause to complain of remissness or inattention. The mess-room at Hounslow is fitted-up with an especial view to the approbation of the fair sex. The band outside ravishes their ears with its enchanting harmony; the officers and male guests dispose themselves in groups with those whose society they most affect; and Blanche finds herself the centre of attraction to sundry dashing

warriors, not one of whom would hesitate for an instant to abandon his visions of military distinction, and link himself, his debts, and his moustaches, to the fortunes of the pretty heiress.

Now, Sir Ascot Uppercrust has resolved this day to do or die—'to be a man or a mouse,' he calls it. Of this young gentleman we have as yet said but little, inasmuch as he is one of that modern school which, abounding in specimens through the higher ranks of society, is best described by a series of negatives. He was *not* good-looking—he was *not* clever—he was *not* well-educated; but, on the other hand, he was *not* to be intimidated—*not* to be excited—and *not* to be taken in. Coolness of mind and body were his principal characteristics; no one ever saw 'Uppy' in a hurry, or a dilemma, or what is called 'taken aback;' he would have gone into the ring and laid the odds to an archbishop without a vestige of astonishment, and with a carelessness of demeanour bordering upon contempt; or he would have addressed the House of Commons, had he thought fit to honour that formidable assemblage by his presence, with an equanimity and *insouciance* but little removed from impertinence. A quaint boy at Eton, *cool hand* at Oxford, a deep card in the regiment, man or woman never yet had the best of 'Uppy'; but to-day he felt, for once, nervous and dispirited, and wished 'the thing was over' and settled one way or the other. He was an only son,

and not used to be contradicted. His mother had confided to him her own opinion of his attractions, and striven hard to persuade her darling that he had but to see and conquer; nevertheless, the young gentleman was not at all sanguine of success. Accustomed to view things with an impartial, and by no means a charitable eye, he formed a dispassionate idea of his own attractions, and extended no more indulgence to himself than to his friends. 'Plain, but neat,' he soliloquised that very morning, as he thought over his proceedings whilst dressing; 'not much of a talker, but a *devil to think*—good position—certain rank, she'll be a *lady*, though rather a *Brummagem* one—house in Lowndes-street—place in the west—family diamonds—and a fairish rent-roll (when the mortgages are paid), that's what she would get. Now, what should I get? Nice girl—'Gad she *is* a nice girl, with her 'sun-bright hair,' as some fellow says—good temper—good action—*and* three hundred thousand pounds. The exchange is *rather* in my favour; but then all girls want to be married, and that squares it, perhaps. If she says 'Yes,' sell out—give up hunting—drive her about in a phaeton, and buy a yacht. If she says 'No,' get *second leave*—go to Melton in November—and hang on with the regiment, which ain't a bad sort of life, after all. So it's hedged both ways. Six to one, and half-a-dozen to the other. Very well; to-day we'll settle it.'

With these sentiments it is needless to remark, that Sir Ascot was none of your sighing, despairing, fire-eating adorers, whose violence frightens a woman into a not-unwilling consent; but a cautious, quiet lover, on whom perhaps a civil refusal might be the greatest favour she could confer. Nevertheless, he liked Blanche, too, in his own way.

Well, the band played, and the luncheon was discussed, and the room was cleared for an impromptu dance (meditated for a fortnight); and some waltzed, and some flirted, and some walked about and peeped into the troop-stables, and inspected the riding-school, and Blanche found herself, rather to her surprise, walking *tête-a-tête* with Sir Ascot from the latter dusty emporium, lingering a little behind the rest of the party, and separated altogether from the General and Mary Delaval. Sir Ascot having skilfully detached Lacquers, by informing him that he had made a fatal impression on Miss Spanker, who was searching everywhere for the credulous hussar; and having thus possessed himself of Blanche's ear, now stopped dead-short, looked the astonished girl full in the face, and without moving a muscle of his own countenance, carelessly remarked, 'Miss Kettering, would you like to marry me?' Blanche thought he was joking, and although it struck her as an ill-timed piece of pleasantry, she strove to keep up the jest, replied, with a laugh and a low curtsy, 'Sir Ascot Uppercrust, you do me too much honour.'

'No, but will you, Miss Kettering?' said Sir Ascot, getting quite warm (for him). 'Plain fellow—do what I can—make you happy—and all that.'

Poor Blanche blushed crimson up to her eyes. Good heavens! then the man was in earnest after all! What had she done, she, the pet of 'cousin Charlie,' and the *protegée* of Frank Hardingstone, that such a creature as this should presume to ask her such a question? She hesitated—felt very angry—half inclined to laugh and half inclined to cry; and Sir Ascot went on, 'Silence gives consent, Miss Kettering—'pon my soul, I'm immensely flattered—can't express what I feel—no poet, and that sort of thing—but I really am—eh!—very—eh!' It was getting too absurd; if she did not take some decisive step, here was a dandy quite prepared to affiance her against her will, and what to say or how to say it, poor little Blanche, who was totally unused to this sort of thing, and tormented, moreover, with an invincible desire to laugh, knew no more than the man in the moon.

'You misunderstand, Sir Ascot,' at last she stammered out; 'I didn't mean—that is—I meant, or rather, I intended—to—to—to decline—or, I should say—in short, *I couldn't for the world!*' With which unequivocal declaration Blanche blushed once more up to her eyes, and to her inexpressible relief, put her arm within Major D'Orville's, that officer coming up opportunely at that moment; and seeing the girl's

obvious confusion and annoyance, extricating her, as he seemed always to do, from her unpleasant dilemma and her matter-of-fact swain.

And this was Blanche's first proposal. Nothing so alarming in it, young ladies, after all. We fear you may be disappointed at the blunt manner in which so momentous a question can be put. Here was no language of flowers—no giving of roses and receiving of carnations—no hoarding of locks of hair, or secreting of bracelets, or kidnapping of gloves—none of the petty larceny of courtship—none of the dubious, half-expressed, sentimental flummery which *may* signify all that mortal heart can bestow, or *may* be the mere coquetry of conventional gallantry. When *he* comes to the point, let us hope his meaning may be equally plain, whether it is couched in a wish that he might 'be *always* helping you over stiles,' or a request that you will 'give him *a right* to walk with you by moonlight without being scolded by mamma,' or an enquiry as to whether you 'can live in the country, and *only* come to London for three months during the season,' or any other roundabout method of asking a straightforward question. Let us hope, moreover, that the applicant may be *the right one*, and that you may experience, to the extent of actual impossibility, the proverbial difficulty of saying—No.

Now, it fell out that Major D'Orville arrived in the nick of time to save Blanche from further embarrassment, in consequence of his inability, in com-

mon with the rest of his fellow-creatures, 'to know his own mind.' The Major had got up the *fête* entirely, as he imagined, with the idea of prosecuting his views against the heiress, and hardly allowed to himself that, in his innermost soul, there lurked a hope that Mrs. Delaval might accompany her former charge, and he might see her *just once more.* Had D'Orville been thoroughly *bad,* he would have been a successful man; as it was, there gleamed ever and anon upon his worldly heart a ray of that higher nature, that nobler instinct which spoils the villain, while it makes the hero. Mary had pierced the coat-of-mail in which the *roué* was encased; probably her very indifference was her most fatal weapon. D'Orville really loved her—yes, though he despised himself for the weakness (since weakness it is deemed in creeds such as his), though he would grind his teeth and stamp his foot in solitude, while he muttered, 'Fool! fool! to bow down before a woman!' yet the spell was on him, and the chain was eating into his heart. In the watches of the night *her image* sank into his brain, and tortured him with its calm indifferent smile. In his dreams *she* bent over him, and her drooping hair swept across his forehead, till the strong man woke, and yearned like a child for a fellow-mortal's love. But not for him the childlike trust that can repose on human affection. Gaston had eaten of the tree of knowledge, the knowledge of good and evil; much did the evil pre-

dominate over the good, and still the galling thought goaded him almost to madness. 'Suppose I should gain this woman's affections—suppose I should sacrifice my every hope to that sweet face, and find her, after all, like the rest of them! Suppose *I*, too, should weary, as I have wearied before of faces well-nigh as fair—hearts even far more kind—is there no green branch on earth? Am I to wander for ever seeking rest and finding none? Am I to be cursed, like a lost spirit, with longings for that happiness which my very nature will not permit me to enjoy? oh that I were wholly good, or wholly bad! That I could loathe the false excitement and the dazzling charms of vice, or steep my better feelings in the petrifying waters of perdition! I *will* conquer my weakness—What should I care for this stone-cold governess? I *will* be free, and this Mrs. Delaval shall discover that *I* too can be as careless, and as faithless, and as hard-hearted, as—*a woman*!' With which laudable and manly resolution our dashing Major proceeded to make the agreeable to his guests, and to lose no opportunity of exchanging glances and mixing in conversation with the very lady he had sworn so stoutly to avoid. But with all his tactics, all his military proficiency in manœuvring, he found it impossible to detach Mary from her party, or to engage her in a *tête-à-tête* with himself. True-hearted, and dignified, with her pure affections fixed upon another, she was not a person to descend to coquetry for the

mere pleasure of a conquest, and she clung to the General for the purpose of avoiding the Major, till old Bounce became convinced that she was to add another name to the list of victims who had already succumbed before his many fascinations. The idea had been some time nascent in his mind, and as it now grew and spread, and developed itself into a certainty, his old heart warmed with a thrill he had not felt since the reign of the widow at Cheltenham, and he made the agreeable in his own way by pointing out to Mary all the peculiarities and arrangements of a barrack-yard, interspersed with many abrupt exclamations and voluminous personal anecdotes. Major D'Orville hovered round them the while, and perhaps the very difficulty of addressing his former love enhanced the charm of her presence and the fascination against which he struggled. It is amusing to see a thorough man of the world, one accustomed to conquer and enslave where he is himself indifferent, awkward as the veriest schoolboy, timid and hesitating as a girl, where he is *really* touched—though woman—

> Born to be controlled,
> Stoop to the forward and the bold.

She thereby gauges with a false measure the devotion for which she pines. Would she know her real power, would she learn where she is truly loved, let her take note of the averted eye, the haunting step, ever hovering near, seldom daring to approach, the

common-place remark that shrinks from the one cherished topic, and above all the quivering voice, which steady and commanding to the world beside, fails only when it speaks to her. Mary Delaval might have noted this had her heart not been in Kaffirland, or had the General allowed her leisure to attend to anything but himself. 'Look ye, my dear Mrs. Delaval, our stables in India were ventilated quite differently. Climate? how d'ye mean? climate makes no difference—why, I've had the Kedjerees picketed in thousands round my tent. What? D'Orville, you've been on the Sutlej—'Gad, sir, your fellows would have been astonished if I'd dropped among you there.'

'And justly so,' quietly remarked the Major; 'if I remember right, you were in cantonments, more than three thousand miles off.'

'Well, at any rate, I taught those black fellows how to look after their nags,' replied the general. 'I left them the best mounted corps in the Presidency, and six weeks after my back was turned they wern't *worth a row of pins.* Zounds, don't tell me! jobbing—jobbing—nothing but jobbing! What? No *sore backs* whilst I commanded them—at least among *the horses,*' added our disciplinarian reflectively; 'can't say as much with regard to the *men.* But there is nothing like a big stick for a nigger—so let's go and see the riding-school.'

'I have still got the grey charger, Mrs. Delaval,'

interposed the major, wishing old Bounce and his Kedjerees in a hotter climate than India; 'poor fellow, he's quite white now, but as great a favourite still as he was in 'the merry days,' and the Major's voice shook a little. 'Would you like to see him?'

Mary understood the allusion, but her calm affirmative was as indifferent as ever, and the trio were proceeding to the Major's stables, that officer going on before to find his groom, when he met Blanche, as we have already said, and divining intuitively what had taken place by her flushed countenance and embarrassed manner, offered his arm to conduct her back to her party, thereby earning her eternal gratitude, no less than that of Sir Ascot, who, as he afterwards confided to an intimate friend, 'was *completely in the hole*, and didn't the least know what the devil to do next.'

And now D'Orville practically demonstrated the advantage in the game of flirtation possessed by an untouched heart. With the governess he had been diffident, hesitating, almost awkward; with the pupil he was eloquent and winning as usual. His good taste told him it would be absurd to ignore Blanche's obvious trepidation, and his knowledge of the sex taught him that the 'soothing system,' with a mixture of lover-like respect and paternal kindness, might produce important results. So he begged Blanche to lean on his arm and compose her nerves, and talked kindly to her in his soft, deep voice. 'I

can see you have been annoyed, Miss Kettering—you know the interest I take in you, and I trust you will not consider me presumptuous in wishing to extricate you from further embarrassment. I am an old fellow now,' and the Major smiled his own winning smile, 'and therefore a fit chaperon for young ladies. I have nobody to care for (D'Orville, D'Orville! you would shoot a man who called you a liar), and I have watched you as if you were a sister or a child of my own. Pray do not tell me more than if I can be of any service to you, and if I can, my dear Miss Kettering, command me to the utmost extent of my powers!' What could Blanche do but thank him warmly, and who shall blame the girl for feeling gratified by the interest of such a man, or for entertaining a vague sort of satisfaction that after all she was neither his sister nor his daughter. Had he been ten years older, she would have thrown her arms round his neck, and kissed him in child-like confidence, as it was she pressed closer to his side and felt her heart warm to the kind considerate protector. The Major saw his advantage and proceeded: 'I am alone in the world, you know, and seldom have an opportunity of doing any one a kindness. We soldiers lead a sadly unsatisfactory, desultory sort of life. Till you 'came out' this year, I had no one to care for, no one to interest myself about; but since I have seen you every day, and watched you enjoying yourself, and admired and

sought after, I have felt like a different man. I have a great deal to thank you for, Miss Kettering; I was rapidly growing into a selfish, heartless old gentleman, but you have renewed my youthful feelings, and freshened up my better nature, till I sometimes think I am almost happy. How can I repay you but by watching over your career, and, should you ever require it, placing my whole existence at your disposal. It would break my heart to see you thrown away—no; believe me, Miss Kettering, you have no truer friend than myself, none that admires or loves you better than your old chaperon;' and as the Major spoke he looked so kindly and sincerely into the girl's face, that albeit his language might bear the interpretation of actual love, and was, as Hairblower would have said, 'uncommon near the wind,' it seemed the most natural thing in the world, under the circumstances, and Blanche leaned on his arm and talked and laughed, and told him to get the carriage, and otherwise ordered him about with a strangely mixed feeling of child-like confidence and gratified vanity. The party broke up at an early hour, many of them having dinner-engagements in London, and as D'Orville handed Blanche into her carriage, he felt that he had to-day made a prodigious stride towards the great object in view. He had gained the girl's confidence, no injudicious movement towards gaining her heart *and* her fortune. He pressed her hand as she wished him good-bye;

and while he did so, shuddered at the consciousness of his meanness. Too well he knew he loved another—a word, a look from Mary Delaval, would have saved him even now; but her farewell was cold and short as common courtesy would admit of, and he ground his teeth as he thought those feet would spurn him, at which he would give his very life to fall. The worst passions of his nature were aroused. He swore, some day, to humble that proud heart in the dust, but the first step at all events must be to win the heiress. This morning he could have given up all for Mary, but *now* he was himself again, and the Major walked moodily back to barracks, a wiser (as the world would opine), but certainly not a better man.

Care however, although, as Horace tells us, 'she sits behind the horseman,' is a guest whose visits are but little encouraged by the light dragoon. Our gallant hussars were not inclined to mope down at Hounslow after their guests had returned to town, and the last carriage had scarcely driven off with its fair freight, ere phaeton, buggy, riding-horse and curricle were put in requisition, to take their military owners back to the metropolis, that victim of discipline, the orderly officer, being alone left to console himself in his solitude as he best might, with his own reflections and the society of a water-spaniel. To-morrow morning they must be again on the road, to reach head-quarters in time for parade, but to-morrow

morning is a long way off, from gentlemen who live every hour of their lives, so away they go, each on his own devices, but one and all resolved to make the most of the present, and glitter, whilst they may, in the sunshine of their too brief noon.

* * * * *

St. George's clock tolls one, and Blanche has been asleep for hours in her quiet room at the back of the house in Grosvenor-square. Pure thoughts and pleasant dreams have hovered round the young girl's pillow, and the last image present to her eyes has been the kind handsome face of Major D'Orville—the hero who, commanding to all besides, is so gentle, so considerate, so tender with her alone. 'Perhaps,' thought she, as the midnight-rain beat against her window-panes, 'he is even now going his bleak rounds at Hounslow (Blanche had a vague idea that the hussars spent the night in patrolling the heath), wrapped in his cloak, on that dear white horse, very likely thinking of *me*. How such a man is thrown away, with his kindly feelings, and his noble mind, and his courageous heart. 'Nobody to care for,' he said, 'alone in the world,' and little Blanche sighed a sigh of that pity which is akin to a softer feeling, and experienced for an instant that startling throb with which love knocks at the door, like some unwelcome visitor, ere habit has emboldened him to walk upstairs, unbidden, and make himself at home.

Let us see how right the maiden was in her conjectures, and follow the Major through his bleak rounds, and his night of military hardships.

As we perambulate London at our loitering leisure, and stare about us in the desultory wandering manner of those who have nothing to do, now admiring an edifice, now peeping into a print-shop, we are often brought up 'all standing,' in one of the great thoroughfares, by the magnificent proportions—the architectural splendour of a building which our peaceful calling debars us from entering. Nevertheless we may gaze and gape at the stately outside, we may admire the lofty windows, with their florid ornaments, and marvel for what purpose are intended the upper casements, which seem to us like the bull's-eyes let into the deck of a three-decker, magnified to a gigantic uselessness; we may stare till the nape of our neck warns us to desist, at the classic ornaments raised in high relief around the roof, where strange mythological devices, unknown to Lemprière, mystify alike the antiquarian and the naturalist—centaurs, terminating in salmon-trout, career around the cornices, more grotesque than the mermaid, more inexplicable than the sphinx. In vain we cudgel our brains to ask of what faith, what principle these monsters may be the symbols. Can they represent the *insignia* of that corps so strangely omitted in the *Army List*—known to a

grateful country as the horse-marines? Are they a glorious emanation of modern art? or are they as the Irish gentleman suggested of our martello towers, only intended to puzzle posterity? Splendid, however, as may be the outward magnificence of this military palace, it is nothing compared with the luxury that reigns within, and the heroes of both services enjoy a delightful contrast to the hardships of war, in the spacious saloons and exquisite repasts provided for its members, by 'The Peace and Plenty Club.'

'Waiter—two large cigars and another sherry-cobbler,' lisps a voice which, although somewhat thicker than usual, we have no difficulty in recognising as the property of Captain Lacquers. That officer has dined 'severely,' as he calls it, and is slightly inebriated. He is reclining on three chairs, in a large lofty apartment, devoid of furniture and surrounded by ottomans. From its airy situation, general appearance, and pervading odour, we have no difficulty in identifying it as the smoking-room of the establishment. At our friend's elbow stands a small table, with empty glasses, and opposite him, with his heels above the level of his head, and a cigar of *'sesquipedalian'* length in his mouth, sits Sir Ascot Uppercrust. Gaston D'Orville is by his side, veiling his handsome face in clouds of smoke, and they are all three talking about the heiress. Yes: these are the Major's *rounds*, these are the hardships

innocent Blanche sighed to think of. It is lucky that ladies can neither hear nor see us in our masculine retreats.

'So she refused you, Uppy; refused you point blank, did she? 'Gad, I like her for it,' said Lacquers, the romance of whose disposition was much enhanced by his potations.

'Deuced impertinent, I call it,' replied the repulsed; 'won't have such a chance again. After all, she's not *half* a nice girl.'

'Don't say that,' vociferated Lacquers, 'don't say that. She's *perfect*, my dear boy; she's enchanting—she's got *mind* and that—what's a woman without intellect?—without the what-d'ye-call-it spark?—a—a—you recollect the quotation.'

'A pudding without plums,' said Sir Ascot, who was a bit of a wag in a quiet way; and 'A fiddle without strings' suggested the Major, at the same moment.

'Exactly,' replied Lacquers, quite satisfied; 'well, my dear fellow, I 'm a man that adores all that sort of thing. 'Gad, I can't do without talent, and music, and so on. Do I ever miss an opera? Didn't I half ruin myself for Pastorelli, because she could dance? Now, I'll tell you what—' and the speaker, lighting a fresh cigar, forgot what he was going to say.

'Then *you're* rather smitten with Miss Kettering, too,' observed D'Orville, who, as usual, was deter-

mined not to throw a chance away. 'I thought a man of your many successes was *blazé* with that sort of thing;' and the Major smiled at Sir Ascot, whilst Lacquers went off again at score.

'To be sure, I 've gone very deep into the thing, old fellow, as you know; and I think I *understand* women. You may depend upon it they like a fellow with brains. But I ought to settle; I 'flushed' a grey hair yesterday in my whiskers, and this is just the girl to suit. It 's not her money I care for; I 've got plenty—at least I can get plenty at seven per cent. No, it 's her intellect, and her refusing Uppy, that I like. What did you say, my boy? how did you begin?' he added, thinking he might as well get a hint. 'Did you tip her any poetry?—Tommy Moore, and that other fellow, little What's-his-name?' Lacquers was beginning to speak very thick, and did not wait for an answer. 'I'll show you how to settle these matters to-morrow after parade. First, I 'll go to—— Who's that fellow just come in? 'Gad, it's Clank—good fellow, Clank. I say, Clank, will you come to my wedding? Recollect I asked you to-night; be very particular about the date. Let me see; to-morrow's the second Sunday after Ascot. I 'll lay any man three to two the match comes off before Goodwood.'

D'Orville smiles calmly. He hears the woman whom he intends to make his wife talked of thus lightly, yet no feeling of bitterness rises in his mind

against the drunken dandy. Would he not resent such mention of another name? But his finances will not admit of such a chance as the present wager being neglected; so he draws out his betting-book, and turning over its well-filled leaves for a clear place quietly observes, 'I'll take it—three to two—what in?'

'Pounds, ponies, or hundreds,' vociferates Lacquers, now decidedly uproarious: 'thousands, if you like. Fortune favours the brave. Vogue la thingumbob! Waiter! brandy and water! Clank, you're a trump: shake hands, Clank. We won't go home till morning. Yonder he goes: tally-ho!' And while the Major, who is a man of conscience, satisfies himself with betting his friend's bet in hundreds, Lacquers vainly endeavours to make a corresponding memorandum; and finding his fingers refuse their office, gives himself up to his fate, and with an abortive attempt to embrace the astonished Clank, subsides into a sitting posture on the floor.

The rest adjourn to whist in the drawing-room; and Gaston D'Orville concludes his rounds by losing three hundred to Sir Ascot; 'Uppy' congratulating himself on not having made such a bad day's work after all.

As the Major walks home to his lodgings in the first pure flush of the summer's morning, how he loathes that man whose fresh, unsullied boyhood he

remembers so well. What is he now? Nothing to rest on; nothing to hope for—loving one—deceiving another. If he gain his object, what is it but a bitter perjury? Gambler — traitor — profligate — turn which way he will, there is nothing but ruin, misery, and sin.

CHAPTER XIII.

The World.

SELLING THE COPYRIGHT — THE POLITICIAN'S DAY-DREAMS — TATTERSALL'S AT FLOOD — A DANDY'S DESTINY.

'CAN'T do it, my lord—your lordship must consider —over-written yourself sadly of late—your *Broadsides from the Baltic* were excellent, telling, clever, and eloquent; but—you'll excuse me—you were incorrect in your statistics, and mistaken in your facts. Then your last novel, *Captain Flash; or the Modern Grandison*, was a dead loss to us—lively work—well reviewed—but it *didn't sell.* In these days people don't care to go behind the scenes for a peep at aristocratic ruffians and chivalrous blacklegs —no, what we want is something original—hot and strong, my lord, and lots of nature. Now these translations'—and the publisher, for a publisher it was who spoke, waved his sword of office, a huge ivory paper-cutter, towards a bundle of manuscripts— 'these translations from the Medea are admirably done — elegant language — profound scholarship — great merit—but the public won't look at them; and even with your lordship's name to help them off, we

cannot say more than three hundred—in point of fact, I think we are hardly justified in going as far as that;' and the publisher crossed his legs and sat back in his arm-chair, like a man who had made up his mind.

We have almost lost sight of Lord Mount Helicon since the Guyville ball, but he now turns up, attending to business, as he calls it, and is sitting in Mr. Bracketts' back-room, driving as hard a bargain as he can for the barter of his intellectual produce, and conducting the sale in his usual careless good-humoured manner, although he has a bill coming due to-morrow, and ready money is a most important consideration. The little back-room is perfectly lined with newspapers, magazines, prospectuses, books, proof-sheets, and manuscripts, whilst the aristocracy of talent frown in engravings from the walls —faces generally not so remarkable for their beauty as for a dishevelled untidy expression, consequent on disordered hair pushed back from off the temples, and producing the unbecoming effect of having been recently exposed to a gale of wind; nevertheless, the illegible autographs beneath symbolize names which fill the world.

Mr. Bracketts, the presiding genius of the place, is a remarkable man; his broad, high brow and deep-set flashing eyes betray at once the man of intellect, the champion whose weapon is the brain, whilst his spare, bent frame is attenuated by that mental labour

which produces results precisely the converse of healthy physical exertion. Mr. Bracketts might have been a great poet, a successful author, or a scientific explorer, but like the grocer's apprentice, who is clogged with sweets till he loathes the very name of sugar, our publisher has been surfeited with talent, till he almost pines to be a boor, to exchange the constant intellectual excitement which wears him to shreds for placid ignorance, a good appetite, and fresh air. How can he find time to embody his own thoughts who is continually perusing, rejecting, perhaps licking into shape those of others; how can he but be disgusted with the puny efforts of the scribbler's wing, when he himself feels capable of flights that would soar far out of the ken of that every-day average authorship of which his soul is sick?—so beyond an occasional slashing review, written in no forbearing spirit, he seldom puts pen to paper, save to score and interline and correct; yet is he, with all his conscious superiority, not above our national prejudices in favour of what we playfully term *good* society. We fear he had rather go to a 'crush' at Lady Dinadam's than sup with Boz. He is an Englishman, and his heart warms to a peer—so he lets Lord Mount Helicon down very easy, and offers him three hundred for his manuscript.

'Hang it, Bracketts,' says his lordship, 'its worth more than that—look what it cost me; if it hadn't been for that cursed 'Sea-breeze' chorus, I should

have been at Newmarket, when 'Bowse-and-Bit,' won 'The Column'—and I should have landed '*a Thou' at least.* But I was so busy at it, I was late for the train. Come, Bracketts, spring a point, and I'll put you 'on' about 'Sennacherib' for the Goodwood Cup.'

'We should wish to be as liberal as possible, my lord,' replied Mr. Bracketts, shaking his head with a smile, 'but we have other interests to consult—if I was the only person concerned it would be different—but, in short, I have already rather exceeded my powers, and I can go no farther!'

'Very well,' said Lord Mount Helicon, looking at his watch, and seeing it was time for him to be at Tattersall's; 'only if it goes through another edition, we'll have a fresh arrangement. It's time for me to be off. Any news among the fraternity? Anything *good* coming out soon?

'Nothing but a novel by a lady of rank,' returned Mr. Bracketts, with a meaning smile; 'and we all know what that is likely to be. Capital title, though: *Blue-belle; or, the Double Infidelity*—the name will sell it. Good morning; good morning, my lord; pray look in again, when you are this way.' And the publisher, having bowed out his noble guest, returned to his never-ending labours, whilst Lord Mount Helicon whisked into the street, with five hundred things to do, and as usual, a dozen appointments to keep, all at the same time.

Let us follow him down to Tattersall's, whither, on the principle of 'business first and pleasure afterwards,' he betakes himself at once, treading as it were upon air, his busy imagination teeming with a thousand schemes, and his spirits rising with that self-distilled elixir which is only known to the poetic temperament, and which, though springing to a certain extent from constitutional recklessness, owes its chief potency to the self-confidence of mental superiority—the reflection that, when all externals are swept away, when ruin and misfortune have done their wickedest, the productive treasure, the germ of future success, is still untouched within.

'If the worst comes to the worst,' thinks his lordship, 'if 'Sennacherib' breaks down, and Blanche Kettering fights shy, and the sons of Judah thunder at the door of the ungodly, and 'the pot boils over,' and the world says 'it's all up with Mount,' have I not still got something to fall back upon? Shall not my very difficulties point the way to overcome them; and when I am driven into a corner, *won't* I come out and astonish them all? I've got it *in* me—I know I have. And the reviewers—psha! I defy them! Let them but lay a finger on my *Medea*, and I'll give them such a roasting as they haven't had since the days of the *Dunciad*. Byron did it: why shouldn't I? If I could only settle down—and I *could* settle down if I was regularly cleaned out—I think I'm man enough to succeed. Bring out a

work that would shake the Ministry, and scatter the Moderate party—then for Progress, Improvement, Enfranchisement, and the March with the Times (rogue's march though it be), and Mount Helicon, at the head of an invincible phalanx, in the House; with unbounded popularity out of doors, an English peerage—fewer points to the coronet—a seat in the Cabinet—why not? But here we are at Tattersall's;' and the future statesman is infernally in want of a few hundreds, so now for 'good information, long odds, a safe man, and a shot at the favourite!'

As he walked down the narrow passage out of Grosvenor-place, now bowing to a peer, now nodding to a trainer, now indulging in quaint *badinage*, which the vulgar call 'chaff,' with a dog-stealer, who would have suspected the rattling, agreeable, off-hand Mount Helicon of deep-laid schemes and daring ambition? Nobody saw through him but old Barabbas, the Leg; and he once confided to a confederate on Newmarket Heath, 'There's not one of the young ones as knows his alphabet, 'cept the Lively Lord; and take my word for it, Plunder, he's a deep-un.'

If a foreigner would have a comprehensive view of our system of English society all at one glance, let him go into the yard at Tattersall's any crowded 'comparing day,' before one of our great events on the turf. There will he see, in its highest perfection, the apparent anomaly of aristocratic opinions and demo-

cratic habits, the social contradiction by which the peer reconciles his familiarity with the Leg, and his hauteur towards those almost his equals in rank, who do not happen to be of 'his own set.' There he may behold Privy Councillors rubbing shoulders with convicted swindlers, noblemen of unstained lineage, themselves the 'mirror of honour,' passing their jests for the time, on terms of the most perfect equality with individuals whose only merit is success; and that indescribable immunity some persons are allowed to enjoy, by which, according to the proverb, 'one man is entitled to steal a horse, when another may not even look at a halter.' But this apparent equality can only flourish in the stifling atmosphere of the ring, or the free breezes of Newmarket-heath. Directly the book is shut, my lord is a very different man, and Tom This or Dick That, would find it another story altogether, where he to expect the same familiarity in the county-rooms or the hunting-field which he has enjoyed in that vortex of speculation, where, after all, he merely represents 'a given quantity,' as a layer of the odds, and where his money is as good as another man's, or, at least, is so considered. Nay, the very crossing which divides Grosvenor-place from the Park, is a line of demarcation quite sufficient to convert the knowing, off-hand nod of our lordly speculator into the stiff, cold bow and studiously polite greeting of 'the Grand Seigneur.' Verily, would-be gentlemen, who take to racing as a means of 'getting into society,' must often find themselves

grievously deceived. But Lord Mount Helicon is in the thick of it. Tattersall greets him with that respectful air which his good taste never permits him to lay aside, whether he is discussing a matter of thousands with Sir Peter Plenipo, or arranging the sale of a forty-pound hack for an ensign in the Guards; therefore is he himself respected by all. '*You* should have bought two of the yearlings, my lord,' says he, in his quiet, pleasant voice; 'Colonel Cavesson never sent us up such a lot in his life before.'

'Ha! Mount!' exclaims Lord Middle Mile, with a hearty smack on his friend's shoulders, 'the very man I wanted to see,' and straightway he draws him aside, and plunges into an earnest conversation, in which, ever and anon, the whispered words—'carry the weight,' 'stay the distance,' and 'stand *a cracker* on Sennacherib,' are distinctly audible.

'I can afford to lay your lordship seven to one,' observes an extra-polite individual, who seems to consider the laying and taking the odds as the normal condition of man, and whose superabundant courtesy is only equalled by the deliberate carefulness of his every movement, masking, as it does, the lightning perception of the hawk, and, shall we add, the insatiable rapacity of that bird of prey? Mount Helicon moves from one group to another, intent on the business in hand. He invests largely against 'Nesselrode' (not the diplomatist nor the pudding, but the race-horse of that name), and backs 'Sennacherib' heavily for the Goodwood cup. He takes the odds to

a hundred pounds, besides, from his polite friend, 'who regrets he cannot offer him a point or two more,' and, on looking over the well-filled pages of his book, hugs himself with the self-satisfied feeling of a man who has done a good day's work, and effected the crowning stroke to a flourishing speculation.

As he walks up the yard, a quick step follows close upon him, a hand is laid upon his shoulder, and a well-known voice greets him in drawling tones, which he recognises as the property of our military Adonis, the irresistible Captain Lacquers. 'Going to the park, Mount?' says the hussar, with more animation than he usually betrays. 'If you've a mind for a turn I'll send my cab away,' and the peer, who cultivates Lacquers, as he himself says, 'for amusement, just as he goes to see Keeley,' replying in the affirmative, a tiny child, in top-boots and cockade is with difficulty woke, and dismissed, in company with a gigantic chesnut horse, towards his own stables. How that urchin who, being deprived of his natural rest at night, constantly sleeps whilst driving by day, is to steer through the omnibuses in Piccadilly, is a matter of speculation for those who love 'horrid accidents;' but it is fortunate that the magnificent animal knows his own way home, and will only stop once, at a door in Park-lane, where he is used to being pulled up, and where, we are concerned to add, his master has no business, although he is sufficiently welcome. 'The fact is I want to consult you, Mount, about a deuced ticklish affair,' pro-

ceeded the dandy, as he linked his arm in his companion's, and wended his way leisurely towards the park.

'Not going to call anybody out, are you?' rejoined 'Mount,' with a quaint expression of countenance. 'Pon my soul if you are I'll put you up with your back to a tree, or along a furrow, or get you shot somehow, and then no one will ever ask me to be 'a friend' again.'

'Worse than that,' replied Lacquers, looking very grave, 'I'm in a regular fix—*up a tree*, by Jove. Fact is, I'm thinking of marrying—*marrying*, you know: devilish bad business, isn't it?'

'Why, that depends,' said his confidant; 'of course you'll be a great loss, and all that, break so many hearts too; but then think—the duty you owe your country. The breed of such men must not be allowed to become extinct. No; I should say you ought to make the sacrifice.'

Lacquers looked immensely comforted, and went on—'Well, I've made arrangements—that's to say, I've ordered some of the things—dressing-case, set of phaeton-harness, large chest of cigars,—but, of course, it's no use getting everything till it's all settled. Now *you* know, Mount, I'm a deuced domestic fellow, likely to make a girl happy. I'm not one of your tearing dogs that require constant excitement; I could live in the country quite contentedly part of the year. I've got resources within myself—I'm fond of hunting and shooting, and—

no, I can't stand fishing, but still, don't you think I'm just the man to settle?'

'Certainly; it's all you're fit for,' replied his friend.

'Well, now to the point. I've not asked the girl yet, you know, but I don't anticipate much difficulty there,' and the suitor smoothed his moustaches with a self-satisfied smile; 'but, of course, the relations will make a bother about settlements, 'love light as air' you know, and 'human flies,' and that; still we must provide for everything. Well, *my* lawyer informs me that I can't settle anything during my brother's life-time, and he's just a year older than myself—that's what I call 'a stopper.' Now, Mount, you're a sharp fellow—man of intellect, you know—'Gad, I wouldn't give a pin for a fellow without brains—what do you advise me to do?'

This was rather a poser, even for a gentleman of Lord Mount Helicon's fertile resources; but he was never long at a loss, so, as he took off his hat to a very pretty woman in a barouche, he replied, in his off-hand way, 'Do? why, elope, my good fellow—run away with her—carry her off like a Sabine bride, only let her take all her clothes with her—save you a *trousseau*. Has she money?'

'Plenty, I fancy; from what I hear, I should think Miss Kettering can't have less than—'

'The devil!' interrupted Lord Mount Helicon, in a tone that would have made most men start. 'You don't mean to say *you* want to marry Miss Kettering?'

'Well, I think *she* wants to marry *me*,' rejoined

Lacquers, perfectly unmoved; 'and you know one can't refuse a lady; but it's only fair to say she hasn't actually *asked* me.'

Lord Mount Helicon felt for a moment intensely disgusted. Blanche's beauty and her simple, pretty manner had touched him, as far as a man could be touched who had so many irons in the fire as his lordship, but the impulse for *fun*, the delight he experienced in quizzing his unsuspecting friend, soon overcame all other feelings, and he proceeded to egg Lacquers on, and assure him of his undoubted success, for the express purpose of amusing himself with the hussar's method of courtship. 'Besides,' thought he, 'such a flat as this hanging about her will keep other fellows off; and with a girl like *her*, I shall have little difficulty in 'cutting *him* out.' So he advised his friend to take time, and 'allow her to get accustomed to his society, and gradually entangled in his fascinations, and then, my dear fellow,' he added, 'when she finds she can't live without you—when she has got used to your engaging ways, as she is to her poodle's—when she can no more bear to be parted from you than from her bull-finch, then speak up like a man—bring all your science into play—come with a rush—and win cleverly at the finish!'

'Aye, that's all very well,' mused the Captain, 'that's just my idea, but in the mean time some fellow might cut me out. Now, there's our Major—D'Orville, you know—('Gad, how hot it is! let's lean over the rails)—D'Orville seems to be always

in Grosvenor-square. He 's an old fellow, too, but he has a deuced taking way with women. I don't know what they see in him either. To be sure, he *was* good-looking; but he 's a man of no education' (Lacquers himself could scarcely spell his own name), 'and he must be forty, if he 's a day. Look at this fellow on the black cob. By Jove! it 's old Bounce, and talk of the devil—there 's D'Orville riding with Miss Kettering next the rails. This *is* a go.'

Now the little guileless conversation we have here related was hardly more worthy of record than the hundred and one nothings, by the interchange of which gentlemen of the present day veil their want of ideas from each other, save for the fact of its being overheard by ears into which it sank like molten lead, creating an effect far out of proportion to its own triviality. Frank Hardingstone was walking close behind the speakers, and unwittingly heard their whole dialogue, even to the concluding remark with which Lacquers, as he leaned his elbows on the rails, and passed the frequenters of 'the Ride' in review before him, expressed his disapprobation of the terms on which Major D'Orville stood with Blanche Kettering. Poor Frank! How often a casual word, dropped perhaps in jest from a coxcomb's lips, has power to wring an honest manly heart to very agony. Our man of action had been endeavouring, ever since the Guyville ball, to drive Blanche's image from his thoughts, with an energy worthy of better success than it obtained. He had

busied himself at his country-place with his farm, and his library, and his tenants, and his poor, and had found it all in vain. The fact is, he was absurdly in love with Blanche—that was the long and short of it—and after months of self-restraint, and self-denial, and discomfort, he resolved to do what he had better have done at first, to go to London, mingle in society, and enter the lists for his ladye-love on equal terms with his rivals. And this was the encouragement he received on his appearance in the metropolis. He had a great mind to go straight home again, so he resolved to call on the morrow in Grosvenor-square, to ascertain with his own eyes the utter hopelessness of his affection, and then—why then—make up his mind to the worst, and bear his destiny like a man, though the world would be a lonely world to him for evermore. Frank was still young, and would have repelled indignantly the consolation, had such been offered him, of brighter eyes, and a happier future. No, at his age there is but one woman in the universe. Seared, callous hearts, that have sustained many a campaign, know better; but verily in this respect we hold that ignorance is bliss. Frank, too, leaned against the rails when Mount Helicon and Lacquers passed on, and gazed upon the sunshiny gaudy scene around him with a wistful eye and an aching heart.

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